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THE HEART OF ARABIA

SHA'ÎB MAZRŪ'A.

To face page 78.

THE ROYAL CAMP-KITCHEN AT AL HISH.

To face page 79.

THE HEART OF ARABIA

A RECORD OF TRAVEL & EXPLORATION

By H. St.J. B. PHILBY C.I.E. I.C.S.
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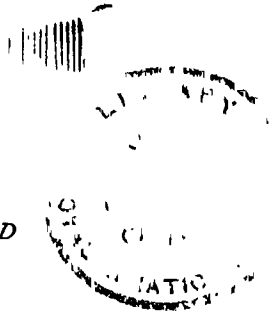

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CHAPTER VIII

AL KHARJ

1. Down the Wadi Hanifa

Failing health, the result of perils and fatigues long borne with patient fortitude, compelled Doughty [1] to put from him a great temptation, when it was suggested to him in all seriousness that, had he a mind to prolong his wanderings in Arabia, he might do so in the direction of the South towards Wadi Bisha and Wadi Dawasir armed with a letter of safe conduct from Husain Pasha, the *Sharif-Amir* of Mecca in those days. That was forty years ago, since when the curiosity of geographical enthusiasts has been active with speculation as to the character of the south country, but no serious, or at any rate successful, effort to explore its mysteries had been made up to the end of 1917, when I, in the course of my journey from Riyadh to Taïf, descried afar off from the Subai' plain a mountainous tract, which they named to me as the Hadhb Dawasir, and of which they told me then that it overlooked the Dawasir valley from the north. I had already been revolving in my mind the project of returning from Taïf by a southerly route instead of by the track, which Doughty and Huber had followed and described, the main road from the Qasim to the Hijaz; the sight of those mysterious mountains confirmed me in my resolution and, by the time we arrived at Taïf, it had been agreed between my companions and myself that our return should be by way of Turaba and Wadi Ranya to Wadi Dawasir, and thence by Sulaiyil and the Aflaj district to Riyadh. I reckoned, however, without my host. In Husain ibn 'Ali, Sharif of Mecca and first King of the Hijaz, the

[1] *Vide* C. M. D. vol. ii. pp. 521-2.

staunch ally of Great Britain, I found but little of the mild complaisance, which Doughty had admired in his earlier namesake. Roundly chid for my temerity in traversing the Holy Land once, and stoutly but in vain protesting at the King's unchivalrous determination to prevent my doing so a second time in the reverse direction, I found myself compelled to take ship at Jidda, regretting the opportunity which had slipped away from me in such exasperating circumstances, and planning without much hope to make good my project of visiting the South should it ever be possible.

And so I came to Ibn Sa'ud at his camp at Shauki fully expecting to find him sufficiently disappointed with the outcome of my negotiations to propose my immediate return to Basra, and at best hoping that, in the event of his agreeing to the immediate inception of hostilities against Ibn Rashid, an opportunity of carrying out my design of a journey to Wadi Dawasir might occur after the conclusion of such operations as might be undertaken in the North. Again I reckoned in ignorance. Far from satisfied with the measure of assistance which the British Government proposed to mete out to him, Ibn Sa'ud nevertheless agreed to carry out his part of the programme, if only to show that Great Britain had underrated the value of the services which he could render to the Allied cause. This decision arrived at, it was not difficult to kindle the latent enthusiasm of all Arabs for warlike undertakings, but the Arab is essentially dilatory and Ibn Sa'ud, no exception to the general rule, demanded time wherein to mature his plans. It was above all essential that he should not have the appearance in the eyes of his people of acting at my suggestion. He accordingly suggested that I should return to Basra or Kuwait and leave him to develop his plan of operations in solitude; he could not promise to begin serious operations before *Ramdhan* and it was now the beginning of *Rajab*; I might return to see the fruits of his labours in two months' time.

I have already [1] described how I resisted the unpalatable suggestion of my return to the coast, and how I induced

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 312.

Ibn Sa'ud to agree to my spending the interval, which must elapse before he was ready for action, in a visit to the South. It was on April 12th that this bargain was concluded between us at his camp by Sha'ib Shauki. Delightful amid the rolling downs of the 'Arma plateau was the Arabian springtide, but its days I knew to be numbered and my mind conjured up visions of a sweltering summer in the southern latitudes I was about to visit. I yearned to be off to get the full benefit of the few weeks of cool weather still remaining. On one occasion I plucked up courage to suggest that there was no need of my going to Riyadh and that it would be most convenient that I should start with as little delay as possible. I met with a decided rebuff; there were good reasons, Ibn Sa'ud explained, why I should accompany him to his capital and start from there; in any case the camels would not be available until his followers and *impedimenta* had been conveyed home. I possessed myself in patience chafing at the inexorable passing of the mild season, while instinct rather than any positive indications prompted me to suspect that Ibn Sa'ud had repented him of a bargain concluded in a generous moment. In this suspicion I proved not to be far wrong. Riyadh was reached on April 19th, and the days passed over my head without producing any obvious signs of preparation for my journey. I began to make cautious enquiries about the palace, from Ibrahim, from Junaifi and Qusaibi, from the slaves allotted to my service, in fact from every quarter from which I might hope to elicit the required information without giving offence by any suggestion of impatience. The camels on arrival from the camp of exercise had been sent out again to recuperate their energies on the spring pastures two or three days distant. Doubtless a selection of the soundest available beasts was being made for my benefit; patience but a little while more and they would be in. Yet none could assure me that orders had been issued to that effect and it became more and more obvious to me that they had not. Turki on one occasion, when I was his guest for coffee, spoke of my projected visit as definitely arranged for and Ibn Sa'ud doubtless heard echoes of my impatient enquiries

from those to whom I confided them; but May succeeded to April without further encouraging sign and I resolved to force matters to a decision without further delay.

My first step was to tackle Ibn Sa'ud himself; at the conclusion of an evening interview I asked him bluntly whether he remembered the compact, to which he had agreed, and reminded him that the summer would soon be upon us. "I remember," he replied, "I have not forgotten, but I have been thinking that at this season you will experience much discomfort. Would it not be better that you should defer the project till after the summer when I will send you whithersoever you may desire? Besides with this affair of the blockade trouble at Kuwait I am anxious to have you with me to consult; but, of course, if you wish to go there is nothing to prevent it, and the camels are all ready to come in." "Well," I said, "it was arranged that I should go, and I thought no more of the matter believing that you had matters in train and would inform me when the preparations were complete. As regards the Kuwait affair you know it is fully settled and no further trouble will occur. I have given you my word for that; but, O *Hakim*, it seems to me that perhaps you really do not wish me to undertake this journey. If that be so, tell me and I shall understand, though I am anxious to go in accordance with our agreement." Thus appealed to on a point of honour Ibn Sa'ud yielded with a fair grace and with an unconvincing assurance that it was only a consideration of my own comfort that had deterred him from further proceeding in the matter. The camels would be sent for at once.

On May 4th, I woke up to find that no further progress had been recorded and Ibrahim, putting in his usual appearance at my *levée*, found me in the worst of tempers. The Arab, readily forgetful of unpleasant incidents of the past and always an optimist for the future, collapses hopelessly under the burden of present troubles, and Ibrahim beat a hasty retreat before the tirade on the dilatory conduct of his kind with which I received him. A few moments later Tami, always a welcome visitor, appeared to plead for a better understanding with Ibrahim. I unburdened myself

to him on the shortcomings of his friend; explained how since my return to their midst I had endeavoured to forget the unfavourable impression I had conceived of him during the journey to the west coast, and how at every turn I was met by a combination of obsequious lip-service and veiled, though none the less dogged, opposition to my every desire. I begged him to do what he could to ensure and hasten the gratification of my wishes and, if possible, to arrange that he should supplant Ibrahim in the charge and direction of the expedition. After a vain attempt to persuade me that I had misjudged the case Tami departed dejected and after a short interval Ibrahim reappeared. I received him in stolid silence feeling that the critical moment had arrived and that the materialisation of my project depended on my rejection of all attempts at a *rapprochement* on any other basis. A protracted silence was interrupted by the arrival of Ata'llah demanding if I would breakfast. I replied that I would not and the slave sat down with Ibrahim to starve me into submission. I affected extreme preoccupation with a book, and Ata'llah retired after half an hour; at 11.30, the test of endurance having lasted just two hours, Ibrahim rose with a great sigh and stumped heavily out of the room, his flowing robes and clanking scabbard trailing after him, with an air of injured dignity. Yet once more during the morning my powers of endurance were put to the test, when Ibn Musallim peeped into my room with a concerned quizzical expression on his solemn face demanding when I would break my fast; "Not to-day," I replied, and he withdrew.

At one o'clock Ibrahim appeared for the third time, as if nothing had happened. "Ibn Sa'ud sends his respects," he said, "and tells me to inform you that the camels are ready." "Well, perhaps we can start in about ten days' time," I replied, unwilling to betray any untoward satisfaction at the success of my manœuvres. "You are laughing at me," he said, "but I tell you the camels are ready." "Very well then, so am I; let us start to-morrow at dawn." "Impossible," he replied; "there are many preparations yet to be made." "Well, then, Ibrahim," I said, "let us not talk about it any more; you see I am ready; when the

camels are really ready, let me know; I will then be ready to mount." And so it was arranged that we should start on the morning of May 6th; the interval was spent in active preparations; the camels destined for our use stood before the palace ruckling and moaning with obvious dismay; and on the evening of May 5th, the last thunderstorm of spring rolled rumbling and lightening before the south-west wind over the broad back of Tuwaiq to the northward.

On the appointed day I rose with the dawn and was soon arrayed for the journey, but the final preparations necessitated a further trifling delay during which I breakfasted and had three farewell interviews, two with Ibn Sa'ud himself and one with Ahmad ibn Thunaian, the purport of all of which was the same. "You are setting forth," said Ibn Sa'ud, "to the South, the first of your kind to visit those parts; put your trust in God, and there's no majesty nor power save in God—there is naught to fear wheresoever you may go in my domains. Glory be to God my writ runs unquestioned therein everywhere and, wherever you go, you will be welcome on my account. See I have appointed Ibrahim, whom you know of old, to be in charge of your party. Leave all arrangements in his hands and listen to his counsels; and here is Ibn Jilham, than whom there is none better acquainted with the affairs and peoples of the South. In God's hands and thereafter in the hands of these two lies the arranging of all things connected with your adventure. You may fare where you will, to the Aflaj, to Sulaiyil, to the Wadi, but see that you overstep not the limits of the Wadi for beyond it there is neither peace nor security. And finally, give a wide berth to Al Fara', for though it be mine and its people are obedient to me, yet the folk of Hauta and Hariq are ignorant and difficult, wild and truculent; leave them to one side and come not near unto them. Farewell and peace be upon you." "The people of Al Fara'," said Ahmad ibn Thunaian, "you heard what Ibn Sa'ud said of them—it is, in truth, even so; they are oxen and without understanding; go not near them."

Thus, with my hosts' last words of warning against the dour denizens of Hauta ringing in my ears and with their

free permission to go elsewhere where I would, I descended to the palace gate and mounted with my companions in the yard, whence we threaded the street leading to the north-east gate of the city. Here we turned south-eastward, following the sandy bed of the Shamsiyya torrent past the royal cemetery and out beyond the palm-fringe to the foot of the Duraibat al Khail ridge, along which we proceeded southward past Manfuha and the battered remnants of the great city which once bore that name, past the little village of Masana' standing back in the midst of its palms, to the walled grange of Miz'al at the southern extremity of the oasis. Here the Shamsiyya *sail*-strand merged in the greater Wadi Hanifa, which, issuing from its cliff-bound course through the Tuwaiq plateau at the Batin somewhat to north-west of this point, flows in a mile-wide valley trending south-eastward between the low cliff of the Tuwaiq on the right and the gentle slope of the Duraibat al Khail on the left, which from this point is known as Hishat al Dakina.

We were now in the midst of the *Wadi*, a confused network of petty pebbly channels merging into a single torrent bed half a mile below the almost obliterated ruins and decayed palm-stumps of Jiza', a landmark of the palmy days of the old kingdom of Yamama. Once a flourishing village and oasis, the place was razed to the ground, it is said, by the Turks a century ago, when Ibrahim Pasha tried to establish his authority in Najd. More recently it was the scene of a bloody conflict between the sons whom Faisal left to wrangle for his throne over his dead body, after a lifetime of conscientious effort to prevent a clash between their mutually incompatible tempers and of fruitless endeavour to compose their furious jealousies, an ebullition of which Palgrave recorded with an accurate prognostication of the future course of events in the narrative of his travels in Arabia.[1] Thus Jiza' is remembered only as one of many battlefields, on which 'Abdullah and Sa'ud fought each other for the sovereignty of Wahhabiland only to lose it in the end to the foreign usurper from Jabal Shammar, in whose dominions the empire of Faisal was

[1] W. G. P. vol. ii. chap. xi. p. 74, and chap. xii. pp. 109 *et seq.*

destined to be included until it was recovered at the dawn of the twentieth century by the young son of a younger son, who had played no part in the struggle between his elder brothers. 'Abdullah died childless, but Sa'ud has left sons and grandsons to envy the better fortune of a younger branch, and even on occasion to contest with it the cherished prize. Of the early history of Jiza' little is known with certainty, but a vague tradition records that it was of old one of a continuous string of flourishing villages and oases, which extended without interruption down the bed of Wadi Hanifa from 'Ayaina in the heart of 'Aridh to Yamama in Kharj until the valley was devastated by a double visitation of locusts and plague, and its settlements ceased to exist, settlements once so thickly clustered together that the news of the birth of a son to a certain patrician of 'Ayaina was published in the city of Yamama on the evening of the day of the occurrence, having been passed on by word of mouth from housetop to housetop down the valley over a distance, which under present conditions an express courier would scarcely cover in three days. Such is the legend, which recalls the *Kos* minarets of *Mughal* India, erected, if we may believe the story, to give the ladies of the Imperial *harem* at Lahore timely warning of the service of dinner to the Emperor at Delhi, lest unwittingly they should offend against the rules of etiquette, which required that they should not eat before their lord and master. There is, doubtless, some foundation in fact for the common conviction that the now desolate *Wadi* enjoyed in the perhaps not very remote past a considerable amount of prosperity, but the absence of ruins except in a few widely scattered spots militates strongly against the acceptance of the current tradition that the divine visitation for the sins of pagan Yamama was in the shape of an epidemic of sickness and locusts. For the cause of the present desolation of the valley we must rather seek in one of two alternatives, according as we believe that the existing settlements and ruin-fields mark the sites of all the ancient settlements or that other oases, once existent, have suffered total obliteration; either the gradual desiccation of the area during a protracted period of failure of

the seasonal rains or the sudden passage of a cataclysmic flood. Each theory has much to commend it. The remains of Shajara Abu Qubasi[1] in Wadi 'Ammariyya illustrate the desertion and gradual decay of a fertile oasis bereft of water. Nevertheless, the story of the great prosperity of the kingdom of Yamama in ancient times cannot be altogether disregarded, while the discovery and excavation in recent years of wells long buried and forgotten in various parts of the *Wadi* afford evidence of the existence in the past of settlements, of which no trace remains. Mindful, therefore, of the caution, which is necessary in such a case, I incline towards the theory of a devastating flood, such as may well occur, and has, indeed, in a few cases been recorded as occurring, when the dry and narrow river-beds of Arabia, fashioned by long use to carry away the waters of an exiguous rainfall, are called upon once in an age to cope with a cloudburst or other abnormal downpour. Such a flood must be rare indeed in Central Arabia, in the zone of Jabal Tuwaiq, but when it occurs it may well, as legend has it, obliterate an Empire.

A clump of dwarf poplars marks the point where the *Wadi*, gathering up its scattered channels into a single bed, sweeps round in a wide curve to the right towards a circular basin, in which it is joined by two affluents, Sha'ib Dakina from the left and Sha'ib Baqra from the gentle dreary slope of Tuwaiq on the right. Here are a number of granges amid their cornfields, the property of the Subai' and Suhul tribes, who range eastwards from Wadi Hanifa over the pastures of Jubail, 'Arma and the Dahana. Here too, I was told, Ibn Sa'ud had recently made an unsuccessful attempt to plant an *Ikhwan* colony. We halted for a brief midday siesta on the rocky banks of the Baqra, having marched about eight miles from our starting-point. To right and left extended a grey monotony of calcareous steppe, sloping upwards from either side of the valley; the sharp rim of Jubail stood out behind the rough ridge of Dakina—such was the scene, which Palgrave, viewing it from the north-western approach to Riyadh, glorified into "the blue hills, the ragged sierra of Yemamah."[2]

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 115.

[2] W. G. P. vol. i. chap. ix. p. 390.

Traversing a slender rocky projection of the Tuwaiq slope, we re-entered the *Wadi* below Bakina soon after resuming our march in the afternoon, and passing through a thick coppice of poplars, which they call *Ghaf*, reached and ascended to the high ground on the left bank, whose limestone slabs are worn into a series of easy steps. For some time our path lay well away from the storm channel, of whose course on our right we had occasional glimpses, as it carved its way through a deep and narrow ravine; we rejoined it two miles lower down by way of the Hifna gorge, a deep cleft contained between weather-worn cliffs forty feet high and honeycombed with cave-like recesses.

From this point we followed the winding bed of the torrent through a deep gorge, thickly wooded with poplar, acacia, and tamarisk, and varying in width from 30 to 100 yards between sheer cliffs, at first some fifty feet high and rapidly increasing in height as we descended. A double line of weedy flotsam marked the highest level attained by the floods of the past season. Seven times during the winter and spring of this year did the Hanifa course down in spate; on one occasion it had proved too much for a group of seven wells, the Qulban Hifna, whose wrecked masonry, vainly accounted by those who built them strong enough to resist the flood, littered the sandy channel for the space of a mile or more. Here and there a shallow bay—I noted eleven [1] between the mouth of the Hifna gorge and Haïr—breaks the regularity of the cliffs on either side where the slopes drain down into the *Wadi*. A few ruinous buildings of stone, apparently watch-towers of bygone days, crown the summit of the bluffs, and in the last reach of the valley before Haïr lay the *débris* of nine wells, known as 'Arair, which had shared the fate of those farther up.

Shortly before 6 P.M. we reached Haïr to the accompaniment of an ineffective and short-lived drizzle after a march of about sixteen miles from Riyadh. The oasis lies in a basin of 200 yards' diameter at the confluence of two important channels with the *Wadi*, which now changes its southerly course abruptly to flow due east. The two

[1] Sha'ibs Murasila, Ghuwaifan, Umm Tulaih, and three others without a name from the left bank, and five nameless *sha'ibs* from the right.

channels in question are Sha'ib al Ha and Sha'ib Ba'aija, which run down into the central basin from the west and S.S.E. respectively between precipitous cliffs. These affluents —the former certainly and the latter also, if local testimony may be trusted—are deep gorges cleaving through the great barrier of Tuwaiq from west to east, and having their heads in the wide rocky bay of its western escarpment, wherein lie the settlements of Ghatghat, Muzahimiyya, and the rest of them, and into which the drainage of Mahmal and 'Aridh pours by way of the Butin or Dhruma valley. The surrounding cliffs rise sheer to a height of some 150 or 200 feet, the highest section being that which connects the mouths of the two tributaries. Under it nestles the little village of Haīr in two unequal sections separated by a narrow strip of bare ground. Four watch-towers crown the summit, three immediately above the village and the other above the angle formed by the left bank of the Ha and the right bank of the *Wadi* at their confluence. These towers have apparently long ceased to be used for the purpose for which they were erected; the peace of Ibn Sa'ud broods protectingly over the country and the appearance of a stranger in the offing is no longer the signal for an armed muster.

The main section of the village, that which lies the nearer to the mouth of the Ha, is roughly a square of some hundred yards, surrounded by a low and greatly dilapidated wall; in it are perhaps some seventy or eighty houses or mud-huts, among which the only pretentious structures are the residence of the local *Amir*, a long rectangular building, and a small mosque with a portico of pointed arches typical of the ecclesiastical architecture of the *Wahhabi* country. The wall appeared to be without the adornment of a public gate, and is disfigured at frequent intervals by small irregular gaps, through which the villagers enter and issue from their own houses. The other group is a shapeless unwalled collection of twenty-five huts—a sort of annexe to the village proper. Both lie conveniently against the cliff in shade from the sun of noon and afternoon.

Before the village is a narrow strip of corn-land, extending a considerable distance up the Ha, on which, as we passed by the morning after our arrival, the village women

were busy winnowing the high-piled stacks of threshed barley. At Riyadh the harvest was not so far advanced, and up to the time of our departure but little progress had been made with reaping. For the rest the sandy storm-channel of the *Wadi* plunges at a short distance below the point, where we had pitched our camp, into a dense forest of palms, poplars, tamarisks and acacia-trees, which nearly fills the whole area of the basin and sprawls irregularly for a short distance up the channels of the Ha and Ba'aija and for a greater distance and more thickly down the easterly continuation of the Hanifa valley. Closer inspection revealed in the midst of this tropical profusion of greenery a considerable pond, from thirty to forty yards across and perhaps 100 yards in length, with a depth of about a foot of water, crystal clear and still flowing, for from the down-stream end I saw issuing forth a tiny stream, which, splaying out at intervals into shallow lagoons of a few inches' depth, continued unbroken for a mile downstream to end in a small deep pool or *ghadir* at the beginning of the tract called Al 'Afja. This pond, which serves the residents of Haïr as a reservoir through great part of the summer — they say that it often holds water till the coming of the rain again — is flushed and filled each year by the Hanifa floods. About its banks there was a soft fragrance as of early summer, emanating from the rank weeds below and the thick poplar clumps above; there was a noticeable buzz of insect life as one brushed through close-grown thickets; and more than once during the night did I hear the ominous song of the mosquito.

Haïr is a true *Badawin* settlement of the Khurma type —a type rare, if not non-existent in Central Najd, though common enough and, indeed, actually predominating, as will appear in the course of this narrative, in the southern provinces and exemplified in the north by Khaibar and Taima.[1] In most such settlements the settled population consists of a considerable majority of negroes, mostly free-men and mostly of pure African extraction in spite of their unbroken Arabian domicile of many generations, and a small minority of clansmen, who have elected for the

[1] And also to some extent in the settlements of Al Sirr.

agricultural pursuits of a fixed habitation in preference to nomad life with its pastoral worries and uncertain adventures. The land belongs in proprietary right exclusively to the tribesmen, settled or nomad without distinction, to each man according to the share due to him under the law of inheritance, while the *'Abid*, the slaves, as they are still called, though such an appellation has in its application to them entirely lost its intrinsic significance, are but the tillers of the soil, *Kaddadid*,[1] digging and delving and labouring on the lands of others for the tenant's share of the produce. This is calculated, it should be noted, solely on the date and corn yields, while such crops as vegetables, lucerne and fruit are by custom remitted in full to the tenant as a reward for and incentive to that extra and wholly voluntary industry, on which the groves of waterless Arabia depend so much for continuous fertility. In Haïr we find a slight deviation from type inasmuch as its resident population is wholly negro, including the *Amir* himself, perhaps some 400 souls, while the nomad lords of the land without exception roam the desert pastures with their flocks and visit their tribal capital only at the date harvesting, when they gather in their dues, and for the month of fasting, when, as for some years it has done and yet will, *Ramdhan* falls in the rainless part of the year. When we came again to Haïr on our return journey towards the middle of *Ramdhan*,[2] the *Badawin* were beginning to gather for their annual aestivation. Perhaps the reason for their disinclination to settle permanently at this spot may be found in the climate, which in a narrow valley shut in by lofty cliffs about a strip of water large for Arabia and exposed to all the fierceness of the sun cannot but be unhealthy.

These *Badawin* are of the Subai' and Suhul tribes, clans once greatly important in the desert expanse of Central Arabia, but long since reduced to comparative impotence and driven eastward before the westerly thrust of the Qahtan and 'Ataiba. The Suhul entirely lost their foothold in their ancient marches around the mountainous country of Al Hamra, where, as I have already noted, they are now

[1] Pl. of *Kaddad* = agricultural labourer.

[2] 13th *Ramdhan* corresponding to 23rd June.

represented only by sorry remnants settled at Ruwaidha and a few hamlets dependent on it. The rest of the tribe now resides exclusively to eastward of the line of Wadi Hanifa in close alliance with the Subai', their fellows in misfortune. The latter resisted the Qahtan invasion to the extent of successfully retaining a considerable tract of their old territories in the west, including Wadi Subai' and Wadi Ranya, where they still remain, but those of them who could not offer adequate resistance in the centre were swept eastward with the Suhul. The Subai' are thus at the present time divided sharply by a vast expanse of desert into two sections, an eastern and a western. The latter I have already discussed [1] in connection with Khurma and their pasturages around it; the western boundary of the former is Wadi Hanifa from Riyadh to Haïr or somewhat downstream of the latter place, whence they range eastward over the downs of Jubail and 'Arma to the Dahana sands and the Summan steppe beyond. A local estimate gives the eastern section of the Subai' some 300 tents in all and the Suhul about 250, from which we may tentatively assume a total population of 1500 and 1250 souls respectively for the two tribes. They have prescriptive rights over the watering at Miyahiyya in 'Arma.

The settled freemen of Haïr are accounted churlish in the matter of hospitality and bore out this reputation by ignoring our short sojourn within their borders. For this I was not sorry, for the first day of an expedition, when the muscles, relaxed by the ease of town-life, resent alike the hard places on the saddle frame and the lurching movements of a camel, is apt to be wearisome, the more so when one has marched through the hours of the greatest heat. A slight headache with a tendency towards feverishness inclined me to be restful, but they lured me out of my tent for dinner, and the steaming mess of rice and mutton drew out the fever from within me and sent me back to my couch bathed in perspiration.

A stiff northerly wind was blowing wisps of sand about the valley under a lowering sky at dawn next day, when we resumed our march through the oasis and along the little

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 170.

stream to the farthest pool, whence, after filling our water-skins, we proceeded in an easterly direction down the *Wadi*, here about 200 yards wide and bounded on either side by cliffs forty feet high. Some fifteen wells scattered about here over a space of a mile are collectively known as Al Afja, into which runs down the Sha'ib Sulaim from the left. A mile lower down or about three miles downstream of Haïr the scene changes somewhat; the *Wadi* turns to the south-east in a mile-wide bed dotted with low sand-dunes and tamarisk trees, among which we found Ibn Sa'ud's wood-cutters at work, hewing wood and loading it upon camels to bear away for the needs of the royal kitchen. The right bank, no longer a cliff, slopes gently away from the valley towards a low ridge of Tuwaiq called 'Araima; on our left the bank was still clearly defined, being a low ridge backed by another somewhat higher, the first beginnings of the Zuwailiyat ridge, which now runs parallel to the *Wadi* for several miles. The Sha'ib Rummanatain, so named on account of the low double-papped knoll in the Zuwailiyat from which it descends, enters the valley at the bend, being the high road for Haïr travellers to the Hasa and the coast.

Thus we proceeded for three miles, the valley becoming steadily more sandy with well-grown acacias of the *Talh* or gum-bearing variety gradually superseding the tamarisks. At this point we avoided a bend of the valley by ascending the low slope of the left bank and following the outer edge of the Zuwailiyat ridge until we came to the prominent conical eminence of Al Suq, whence the ridge continued under the name of Tawal al Suq. Thus for somewhat more than four miles we marched along the base of the chord formed by the slight bend of the *Wadi* beyond whose farther bank lay the Sudair and Duwaira ridges, prominent in the former being two hillocks called Umm 'Anaiq and Umm Rughaiba respectively, while close to the right bank and at the foot of the Duwaira ridge rose the conical sand-pile of Niqa' Mutawwa'. Re-entering the valley again, we followed it for three miles, when, leaving it to continue on an easterly course, we ascended its sandy right bank and pitched our midday camp amid some sand-billows lying

against and in parts obliterating the Duwaira ridge, from whose summit I had an excellent opportunity of surveying the scene around—a dreary succession of low, echeloned ridges converging gradually from either side on the broad but ill-defined channel of Wadi Hanifa, trending as far as eye could see somewhat south of east. On the left lay the Zuwailiyat ridge continued by the Tawal al Suq ; behind it and somewhat higher was the ridge of Ashqar Maragha with a *sha'ib*, called Maragha, flowing down to the Hanifa between the two. Behind again was the clear-cut rim of the Jubail, guarding the eastern flank of Wadi Sulaiy, whose point of confluence with the Hanifa lay several miles farther down. On the right with broad shallow valleys between them lay, in succession from north to south, the ridges of Hufaira, Suwaida and Firzan, the last named terminating in a couple of low conical eminences, which constitute the portals of Kharj. The sand-billows among which we had camped began a mile or two upstream of this point in the neighbourhood of the Niqa' Mutawwa' and continued along the course of the *Wadi* in an unbroken series of dunes, now high, now but little raised above the ground, now in the channel itself, and now piled up on the right bank, up to the confines of Kharj.

During the course of the morning's march I had made some progress in a mental inventory of my companions, whose individualities now began to sort themselves out of the human mass, which had ridden out of Riyadh as my escort. Ibrahim and Tami are already well-established characters in my narrative ; they alone were with me of the Jidda party, as Sa'id the *Qahtani*, who ran up to us with unexpectedly cordial greetings as we issued forth from the city gate into the Shamsiyya channel, and had, in answer to my ready invitation, promised to rejoin us at Haïr from his home at Muzahimiyya, whither he was then proceeding, had failed, as he had probably never intended, to keep his tryst. Rushaid, or Akhu Hasana as he was more often called by his friends as a tribute of admiration and affection for his sister, usurped the place of Sa'd al Yumaini, as, for no particular merit of his own, he was destined in due course to usurp that of Ibrahim ; he has already made his appear-

ance [1] in my story and will do so frequently again. Sa'd ibn Jilham, the *doyen* of the party, lagged for the most part behind and proved always more companionable round the camp-fire by night than on the march at noontide. Muhammad, a *Dausari*, was a smiling, languid youth, torn, it appeared, from the arms of his first bride, newly wedded and exceedingly beautiful; he was in consequence absent-minded and not a little perturbed by the prospect of a long absence from his new home, which, as he told me in the course of these first days, was wandering with the *Badawin* on the confines of Kharj—not far off. Nasir, an *'Atáibi*, and 'Ubaid, a *Qahtani*, accompanied us as *Rafiqs* against the event of our falling in with parties of the tribes to which they belonged, the former being a link with Shakespear. He was the son of Talaq, who, with Tami, accompanied him from Riyadh to Buraida in 1914 and incidentally saved him from a nasty encounter with an 'Ataiba raiding-gang.

Our party consisted at this time of twenty-two persons, including myself, divided into two sections—escort and service-gang. Of the latter I need not here speak in detail, as it was seldom with me on the march, its movements being directed to the end of arriving at its daily destination in the quickest time. Of the escort let the above suffice for the time being by way of introduction; three members of it I have omitted as deserving a more particular mention. 'Abdulrazzaq of the royal household was a sort of master of the horse, a splendid specimen of pure-bred negro, large-limbed and heavy-lipped, pugnacious to a dangerous degree, recklessly courageous and unquestioningly faithful to Ibn Sa'ud and in any task which the latter might delegate to him. I had hoped that either Manawar or Ata'llah, men of a milder character and tried in my service, might be deputed to accompany me in this capacity of guardian-angel, but my hopes being disappointed I took it as a high compliment that 'Abdulrazzaq, hitherto specially charged with the care of the little princes, Muhammad and Khuwailid, on their equestrian excursions about Riyadh, should have been selected for my service, and I had in the course of this expedition no ground of complaint against him except that

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 334.

in certain crises, to be related hereafter, his zeal outran his discretion. Wherever I went he accompanied me, armed to the teeth, to sit patiently by my side as I surveyed the country from some prominent hill-top; should I slip away quietly from camp to sit in solitude, it was never long before he was at my side protesting that I should not do such things. The second was an uncouth, wild-haired *Marri* with the keen visage of a sleuth-hound, a man somewhat past the middle age, in whose wrinkled face appeared a marvellous combination of relentless cunning and merry kindliness—such was Jabir ibn Faraj, chief of the Suwaihit subsection of the Libhaih section of the Ahl Murra, the crudest of all the tribes of Central Arabia and the lords of that vast desert, which, but for their occupation of it, is aptly named the Empty Quarter. I have his word for it and little reason to doubt it that on three occasions he had crossed the southern sands to the coast of the southern sea, on which, as he put it, he had looked out with the Pole Star at his back; the objectives of his people on these expeditions were the coastal tribes of Wuhiba, 'Awamir and Duru', from whom they filched away numbers of the highly prized *Farha* (white) and *Safar* (grey) varieties of *'Umaniyya* camels. Of the life and manners of his tribe in their oasis of Jabrin and in the Khiran or tract of briny wells in the midst of the sands he told me much, which I shall relate hereafter. Finally there was Mitrak ibn 'Amara of the Shamir, a tribe cognate with the 'Ajman and claiming affinity with the Yam tribes of Najran and the south-west. The high ridges and deep ravines of Jabal 'Alaiya, that section of the Tuwaiq barrier which lies south of 'Aridh and north of Al Fara', are their home. Mitrak was our guide-in-chief for the early stages of the march and again during the last days; consequently he soon became and remained my constant companion and, in spite of many disagreements by the way, a valued friend, always ready with his inexhaustible store of good humour and sound sense and, not least, with a fund of botanical lore remarkable even in an Arab, for every Arab, just as he is a born rider and a born camel-master, is a born economic botanist. On his knowledge of the herbs of the desert depends the welfare of his beasts, and thus it is that, as they march, their

eyes are glued to the ground, while their tongues wag ceaselessly in discussion of the merits of this plant or that —as camel fodder; of insects and birds they know nothing except an occasional name; of the wild quadrupeds their knowledge is vague and elementary. Large and clumsily built, Mitrak was hard as nails; his youth from the age of ten onwards had been spent in earning a livelihood as a brigand and highway robber in the very country through which he was now to guide us. He was now in the early thirties and had abandoned his former ways only a few years before to accept service under Ibn Sa'ud, who had made the career of brigand unprofitable by a strong policy relentlessly pursued against the law-breaker. It was as we sat on the summit of the Duwaira ridge this second day of our march that Mitrak discovered to me something of the merit within him; his ruddy pock-marked cheeks and snub nose glowed with enthusiasm as he told me something of his youthful escapades, of the single wife and family of young children he had left behind in his people's tents in 'Arma, and of the plants and grasses about us, of which, without further ado, he made a representative collection for my benefit and insisted on my writing to his dictation a record of the name and uses of each. No Arab did I meet in all my wanderings readier and prouder to impart his knowledge; for none did I ever conceive so strong a feeling of genuine affection; off and on he remained my companion till the end of my sojourn in Arabia, which I left with a lively regret that circumstances had not admitted of my accepting his cordial invitation to spend a period with him in the tents of the Shamir Arabs.

Our march, resumed in the afternoon, lay over the valleys and ridges to the south of the *Wadi* for a distance of a dozen miles to our evening camp on the hither side of the peaks at the extremity of the Firzan ridge. About half-way and close to the eastern extremity of the Hufaira ridge we came to the single well of Hufaira roughly dug to a depth of five fathoms in the middle of a wide circular patch of lime-stone soil. The water was discoloured and stagnant, emitting an unpleasant putrid odour, and had apparently not been disturbed by drawers for months. This watering is reckoned

to two subsections of the Shamir, namely Al Fursan and Al Junaifir, to the former of which Mitrak belongs. Round the well was a black circle of sheep droppings bleaching in the sun.

Between this point and the Firzan ridge, which now gradually converged upon our course, the valley is vaguely styled Sha'ib Kharj; it slopes towards the *Wadi*, but appeared to be completely blocked of access to it by the line of sand-dunes already mentioned, which at this point was of considerable width though low-lying. The remainder of the march as we drew within sight of the first palms of Kharj, the oasis of Sulaimiyya, was without interest, and as the sun dipped towards the horizon we respected the Arab prejudice against claiming hospitality in the evening and pitched our camp outside the vestibule of Kharj a short distance from the Firzan hillocks, leaving our entry into the district for the morrow.

2. Northern Kharj

With Mitrak and a few others I climbed up to the summit of the higher of the twin hillocks to spy out the land before the shades of night descended upon us. A wide and varied scene met our gaze. North-westward extended as far as we could see the dull hazy vista of Wadi Hanifa between its farthest limits of the Firzan ridge, which ran out due west from our point of observation, and the Jubail escarpment; the latter merged in a low slightly-undulating down not far off to the north, where the Sulaiy runs down into the Hanifa, which continues its course between scarcely perceptible banks until it reaches the Shadida, a long low ridge, lying west by east, which with a similar but partly sand-covered ridge, called Barqa Sara, henceforth forms the left bank of the valley. Afar off somewhat to the east of north across the wide gap between the extremities of Jubail and Shadida appeared the Turabi valley with the dim outline of the 'Arma beyond it; the little mounds of Jabal 'Aqla, in whose neighbourhood we had camped in November on the way to Riyadh, gave me the thrill of pleasure that an old landmark does in a strange country. In this

respect the Shadida too was an old friend, for it had been pointed out to me on the same occasion as we emerged from 'Arma; beyond it, they had told me, lay Kharj and so it was. To south-west and south-east respectively lay the bold outline of 'Alaiya and the low downs of Qusai'a, which appeared to join at the farther end of the Kharj valley in the neighbourhood of Khashm Khartam, a ponderous craggy headland, standing out like a promontory from the great steppe desert, which, hidden from our view at this point by the intervening ridges of Qusai'a, is called Al Biyadh or the white country and constitutes in fact the beginning of the Empty Quarter, for in all its length and breadth as in the sands beyond it there is neither water nor human habitation.

Such is the outer shell, within which lies the district of Kharj, once the centre of a great empire extending from Wadi Dawasir in the south to the Qasim, but now, like Mahmal, reduced to the status of a dependency of the central province of 'Aridh. The valley is a long shallow trough roughly of the shape of an isosceles triangle, based on the Wadi Hanifa and extending due south to its apex at Khashm Khartam, its sides bulging slightly and irregularly towards the west. Its extreme length from north to south is about thirty-five miles, while its width decreases progressively from some eight miles at the base to less than half a mile at the gap between the Khartam projection and the Tuwaiq plateau, through which descends one of the three great "rivers," which make Kharj the pivot of the whole hydrographical scheme of Central Arabia.

This is Sha'ib 'Ajaimi; the others are Sha'ib Nisah—which, rising in the Bukhara and Khashm al Dhibi hills noted in the course of my journey westward across the Qunaifida *Nafud*, cleaves through Tuwaiq and enters Kharj at its north-western corner along the southern slopes of the Firzan ridge—and Wadi Hanifa. The 'Ajaimi affords an excellent illustration of the disconcerting Arab habit of sectional nomenclature, of which I have already noted an example in the case of the various sections of Wadi Fatima. The name is applied locally in Kharj to the third or *cis*-Tuwaiq section of a *Wadi* greater than the

Hanifa itself, which we have already encountered in the western part of the Najd Highlands, whence, from its source in the 'Alam ridge, it runs under the name of Wadi Sirra[1] at first southward and then eastward along the northern flank of the Sabha mountain and the sands of Nafud Dahi to the edge of Tuwaiq; there, changing its name to Sha'ib Birk, it bursts through the barrier to emerge as the 'Ajaimi. The Arab is a confirmed utilitarian in all things and in none more so than in his system of geographical nomenclature, by whose wearying sameness no traveller in Arabia can fail to be struck. Now sparing and again apparently needlessly lavish, it obeys, however, almost invariably one of two guiding principles dictated by the physical features of the country itself. In Arabia nothing is so important as water, without which man and beast must perish, but water is not found everywhere, and wherever it is found the fact is impressed on the mind by a name, and the name of the watering is applied to every feature of the countryside about it; for instance, some way southward of Kharj is an exiguous source, which they call Mishash al Niswan; behind it is the low cliff of a section of the Biyadh ending in a headland from which runs a little rill towards the 'Ajaimi; the cliff, the headland and the stream are called Dhila', Khashm and Sha'ib Mishash al Niswan. Again, second in importance are the pastures in a land where drought means the annihilation of flocks and herds; in a long *Wadi*, which seldom flows as a river, portions may be dry, while others are refreshed by a local storm and bear grass; the green portions may be at intervals separated by many days' journey, in search of which the flock may perish if not exactly directed; therefore the Arab divides up his *Wadi* by sections applying to each a name whereby he may know it, and so it is that, when tidings come in of grazing here or there in a valley hundreds of miles in length or in some tributary ravine thereof, he can place his finger with precision on the favoured locality in the map of his mind's eye, though there are but few who can connect up the scattered fragments into an intelligible whole or realise that in reality they are but sections of a single entity.

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 151.

The 'Ajaimi, Nisah and Hanifa coalesce at the north-eastern corner of the district eastward of the oasis of Yamama to form the Sahaba, a broad depression of clayey salt-impregnated loam covered in great part by drift-sand, trending eastward into the far distance. They say that this river-bed of ancient times may be traced distinctly as far as the not distant sand-barrier of the Dahana, less clearly but unmistakably in its passage through the sands and thereafter as a broad shallow trough, perhaps not unlike the Batin, through the steppe country, wherein it is crossed at midway by the highroad from the Hasa to Jabrin, to the east coast southward of the peninsula of Qatar. In it lie the wells of Wasi'a, where it passes through the 'Arma downs. South of this line begins the territory of the Ahl Murra, whose western boundary, if one may venture to be precise in such a matter, follows the western fringe of the Biyadh from the head of the Sahaba to the headland of Mishash al Niswan and thence turns southward roughly along the line of parallel 47° East to the borders of the Hadhramaut. With them march the Dawasir as far as their southern limits on the line of Wadi Dawasir itself and the Yam tribes from that point southwards.

Behind the visible ridge of Qusai'a, according to report, runs Sha'ib Thulaima draining the downs into the Sahaba, while beyond it southward are the four small wells of Qubishat close by two low conical hills of basalt. On the hither side of these hills are the wells of Al Amghar with the watering of Al 'Amaidi to their south-east, and farther south is Abu Hadad, six or seven wells with water at five fathoms, close under the hill of Umm al Ghurban and in the bed of a *Sha'ib* called Al Khawwar. Beyond these is the hinterland, the Biyadh.

The night was pleasantly cool under a light north breeze, and next morning we rose betimes for a detailed visitation of the settlements we had seen dotted about the valley from the Firzan hillock. I got up with a disturbing feeling of discomfort within me as if I had been chilled; the thermometer recorded 59° Fahrenheit at 5 A.M. and I longed for the sun, but the growing warmth failed to remedy, while the hospitality of the *Amirs* of Sulaimiyya and

Yamama served but to intensify the disorder, which on arrival at our next camp after noon I subjected with ultimate but complete success to a drastic treatment of fasting, sleep and brandy, having come in the meantime on comparison of notes with my companions, most of whom confessed to being in like case, to the conclusion that the water of Haïr, drawn not from the running stream, but from the still pool at its extremity, was the origin of the disturbance. As far as I can remember, this was the only occasion during my sojourn in Arabia on which I suffered by reason of water, as it was certainly the only occasion on which I drank from what was for all practical purposes a village cesspool. Year by year the torrent streams of Arabia bring health to the oases lying athwart their beds by flushing them of the collected filth of a season, and the danger-point lies in the pools formed immediately downstream of a settlement by the exhausted flood. The experience of this day was a lesson to me for the future.

As we prepared to mount, my attention was directed by a general titter towards Mitrak, whose *Dhalul* had risen and, with her legs spread out, was staling copiously, as they do on first rising from a night's couching, while he, bending forward to receive the beneficent shower upon his head, was engaged with hands and comb in wringing out his dripping curly locks. His ruddy face beamed with pleasure as he rose after the operation to brush back and part his hair, explaining that this manner of cleansing the hair was a commonplace of *Badawin* life, the urine of the camel, with whose uses in the Arabian pharmacy I was already acquainted[1] in some degree, being accounted a sovereign preventative and destroyer of capillary parasites—a stranger and more repulsive hair-wash was surely never imagined.

At a distance of a few yards from our camp we passed between the two hillocks of Firzan over a low saddle connecting them, and on the slope immediately to our left found the Firzan spring, the head of a subterranean irrigation channel running eastward to the palms of Sulaimiyya some three miles distant. The development of the northern section of Kharj is the special care of the *Imam*

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 330.

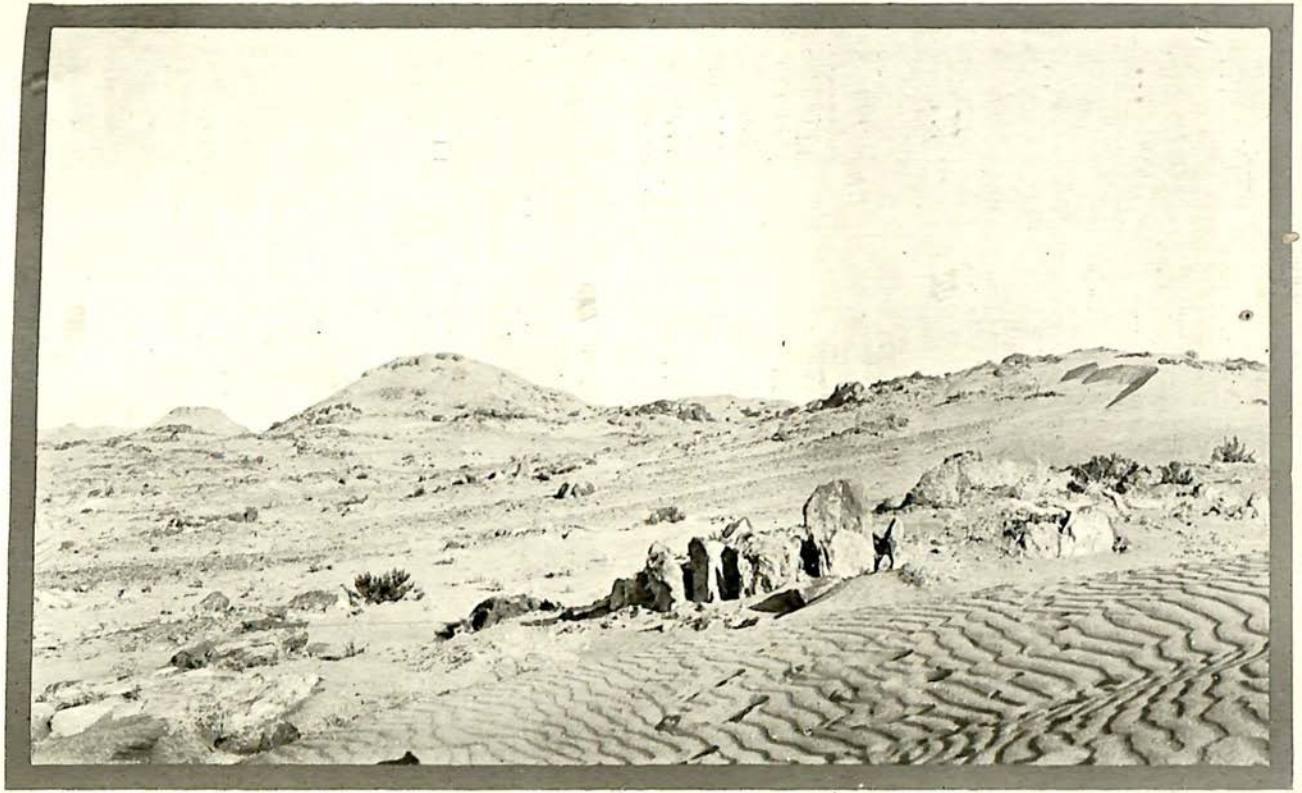
Abdulrahman, who had told me in conversation that the Firzan source and stream, which had been thoroughly overhauled and repaired by his father, Faisal, had suffered much through wilful damage and prolonged neglect in the period of anarchy and disorder which ʿAbdullah and Saʿud had inflicted upon the country. He himself had recently taken the matter in hand and hoped to restore the royal groves in Sulaimiyya to something of their old-time prosperity; in this connection he had expressed a hope that I might have an opportunity of examining the work and reporting on it for his benefit, and on the eve of my starting on this expedition he had sent messages to me by Ahmad ibn Thunaian and Ibrahim reminding me of my promise and incidentally mentioning that his workmen on the scene had reported the discovery of *Makatib* or ancient inscriptions. I was now gratified to find that the foreman of the works, who was on the spot with some forty daily labourers, had instructions to forward my researches, and in company with him and a few of his men I made a thorough inspection of the spring, the channel and the ruins in their neighbourhood, among which to my chagrin I failed to discover the faintest trace of any inscription. When in due course I reported the result of my labours to Ibn Saʿud for communication to his father I combined much sage advice on irrigational matters with an encouraging suggestion that further excavations among the ruins might well result in the discovery of a written stone revealing the positions of hidden sources and other priceless secrets relating to the irrigation schemes of the ancients. As far as I know no such excavations were attempted, and the *Imam* rested content with the modest programme of silt-clearance to which he had put his hand.

The spring issues from the earth at the bottom of an unlined shaft roughly sunk into the hill-side to a depth of about four fathoms. For the time being it was in abeyance under a heavy pile of rubble, dates and mortar pressed down layer upon layer within the shaft to suppress its flow. The channel, therefore, with the exception of scattered pools here and there along its course, was dry and in it the workmen laboured step by step upward from the Sulaimiyya

end, having arrived at the time of my visit about midway after rather less than two months' work. The stream, when free, flows in a subterranean tunnel, about three feet or more in diameter, of the ordinary Persian or *Kariz* type here called *Kharaz* or *Saqi*; at intervals of ten or fifteen yards wide circular shafts are sunk from the ground level above to the upper circumference of the tunnel to facilitate the task of periodical inspection and repairs, while towards the upper end the channel becomes a series of open passages hewn out of the solid rock of the hill-side to a depth of four fathoms, from which the water-level rises progressively with the land-slope to only two and a half fathoms at the downstream end.

In reply to enquiries about the reported inscriptions I was conducted northwards from the *Saqi* towards a low sand-covered semicircular projection of the ridge a quarter-mile distant. I now found myself in the midst of a sandy tract curiously littered with broken pieces of rock and extending across the shoulder of the ridge over an area perhaps half a mile long and somewhat less in width. "There are no inscriptions here," said our guide; "we have found no writings, but this is what we wrote of to the *Imam*; behold the relics of antiquity about you." With a feeling of bitter disappointment I turned towards the rock-strewn scene, perhaps a modern cemetery and, but for its larger blocks of stone, not indeed at first sight unlike the graveyards about Riyadh. I dismounted to satisfy myself on this point and my trouble was rewarded. The stones appeared to set themselves in circles about me enclosing low mounds of *débris* in which I noticed lumps of a white mortar-like material, perhaps of gypsum. Surely here was the wreckage of the handiwork of man in some distant age, perhaps some cemetery, but of no modern fashion, though more likely the site of some ancient town,[1] the secret of whose

[1] I have left the passage relating to these ruins as I originally wrote it (early in 1919) only because there is no means by which their mystery may be definitely solved; but Mr. D. G. Hogarth has shown, doubtlessly conclusively, that they are the ruins not of a settlement but of a cemetery, the material originally piled up over the stone foundations having so weathered as to expose the latter (*vide J.R.G.S.*, March, 1920). He agrees that they should probably be attributed to non-Arab agency, but holds



THE RUINS OF FIRZAN.

identity, history and final calamity lies buried, maybe, in its ruins.

In this ruin-field are disposed in no immediately appreciable pattern and without symmetry countless circles of various sizes and of uniform appearance. By far the greater number varied from five to ten yards in diameter; here and there, more particularly towards the eastern part of the area, was a greater circle, while almost at the eastern edge, where the drift-sand from the Hanifa valley lay thick on the outermost spurs of the ridge, stood the largest of all, an imposing circle some forty-five yards in diameter. The smaller circles comprised generally a low mound of earth surrounded at frequent intervals along its circumference by rough-hewn blocks of stone set up on end and from two to three feet high; within this space lay blocks of similar masonry buried in a mass of rubble, small stones and mortar, the central point raised to a height of not more than three or four feet above the ground-level, while in some cases the central masonry was missing. In the greater circles there generally appeared a transverse line of large stone blocks bisecting the circle from side to side, and in the largest of them this was particularly noticeable as well as the presence of smaller circles, one in each quartering of the great round. This great circle was marked out by blocks of stone varying from three to five feet in height and set out at intervals of a yard or two with occasional larger gaps; the central part of the inner space stood some four or five feet above the level of the ground and was traversed by a line of boulders, four or five feet high and somewhat longer, lying north and south with a wide gap at the middle point facing east and west. As I stood in this gap facing the sun still low on the

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that, with the evidence before us, we can make no further advance in a positive direction, and that the suggestion of a Phoenician origin for the ruins presents too many difficulties to be accepted in the present state of our knowledge. This suggestion was made by Sir Thomas Holdich in view of the resemblance of these stone-circles of Kharj to similar ruins excavated at Bahrain by Theodore Bent and described by him before the Royal Geographical Society in 1890 (*vide Proc. R.G.S.*, January, 1890, pp. 1 *et seq.*), but according to Mr. Hogarth there are objections to accepting Bent's view that the Bahrain circles are of Phoenician origin (*vide J.R.G.S.*, December, 1920, pp. 463-4).

horizon my thoughts wandered to Palgrave's description[1] of the stone wonder at 'Uyun in the Qasim, and I mused that possibly the ruins before me might be the wreckage of another such monument of the days when the heavenly bodies were adored by the Arabians.

Whether this be so or not I do not venture to judge; one is tempted to conjure up the vision of a people living in domed or hive-like dwellings built up of clay on a foundation of stone pillars with a central support of the same material; or again, seemingly with more reason, to connect the dwellers on this old site with the artificers of the *Kariz* already described and both with the name, which survives to this day, of the ridge by which they lie—Firzan : Fursan : the Persians. "The Arab is a rude etymologer," as Doughty aptly noted and on etymological grounds alone we need not hesitate to accept the theory here advanced if it commends itself to us on other grounds. The Arab begins by mispronouncing, justifies himself by mis-spelling, and proceeds boldly to explain the result of his double error by a process of faulty aetiology. The very name of Kharj is, or at any rate seems to me, as good an example as one could find of this triple tendency—the district, according to Ibn Sa'ud, is so called because in the old days it was the source or *Makhraj* of the corn supply of Mecca and Madina, an explanation with which I find no fault except that it postulates a degree of credulity rare in man outside Arabia to accept without evidence a statement so intrinsically improbable. I venture to derive the name from a striking natural feature within the district itself, but I am anticipating events.

To Jabir the *Marri* I owe the clue, which suggested a Persian origin for the ruins. As we stood by the *Kariz* examining the channel and downward shafts, he told me that he had seen a precisely similar system in operation at Qatif, where, as is well established, Persian influence was dominant in the middle ages. Now, as we shall see in due course in

[1] W. G. P. vol. i. chap. vi. p. 251. He notes on local authority the existence of similar monuments at Rass and Hanakiyya, but, so far as I know, subsequent visitors to 'Uyun have omitted to confirm the stone circles Palgrave claimed to have visited. *Vide* also Chapter IX. § 6, pp. 140-41 *infra*.

the Aflaj province and again in Al Sirr and the Qasim, the *Kariz* is not unknown in other parts of Arabia, where definite or even plausible evidence of Persian penetration is not forthcoming, but the juxtaposition of an exotic type of irrigation channel and a town, if such it was, whose like is, as far as I know, not found in Arabia except in close proximity to a *Kariz*, is significant. Ruinous sites are all too common features of the Arabian landscape, relics of long years of alternating prosperity and disastrous war, but in all the ruins of what one may perhaps call the historical period of Central Arabian history, the history, that is to say, of the last two or at most three centuries, we may trace two features common to them and to the settlements, which have survived to our time or are now in course of creation. The buildings are invariably of mud or clay with rare insertions of masonry, while the site is not a bare hillside but the heart of an oasis. The natural conclusion is that the people who built their abode of stone on the slopes of the Firzan ridge at some distance from the groves and fields they cultivated in the trough of the valley were people whose mode of life differed widely from that of the nomad Arabs, ancient and modern—presumably, therefore, not Arabs but foreigners sojourning in a strange land and, if foreigners, possibly Persians, who had penetrated into the interior in the days when they held the coast.

From the ruins of Firzan we returned to the aqueduct and, after following its course for about half-a-mile, struck eastward over the sandy plain lying between it and the trough of Wadi Hanifa. We now passed through the corn lands of Bida', dotted at intervals with the clay ruins of deserted granges and the gear of some fifteen wells with plentiful water at a depth of four or five fathoms—a settlement of unprosperous appearance comprising perhaps 150 or 200 acres of cultivated land. Farther up the *Wadi* and on the same bank lies the smaller sister settlement of Budai'a, which we had seen at closer quarters from our camp of the previous evening.

As we now faced towards the palm-groves of Sulaimiyya, a mile distant, the Shadida ridge lay parallel to us on the left hand, marking the farther edge of Wadi Hanifa, while

over its brow peeped the hillock of Dhaba' separated from it, they said, by the grassy depression of Raudha Haniyya.

The palm-groves of Sulaimiyya, surrounded by a much dilapidated mud wall of no great height, lie north and south in an irregular oblong a mile long and half as much across. The *Kariz* enters it at its south-western corner, where are situated the better gardens, all the property of the royal family, and is soon exhausted, while the rest of the settlement depends for its water on a number of four-fathom wells worked by donkeys, cows and—rarely—camels. The village or hamlet itself occupies an angle formed by the palms at the north-western extremity, towards which we now made. There was little in it to delay us, and entering by a projecting gate at the northern end we passed rapidly down what appeared to be its only street to a gateway at the southern end, issuing from which we found ourselves in the midst of palm-gardens. We then proceeded along a crooked walled lane to the *Amir's Qasr*, a clay building somewhat more pretentious than the hovels of the ordinary villagers and situate on the edge of a fine grove of palms—one of the royal groves as it turned out. Dismounting, we were conducted by one of the *Amir's* servants into a large and lofty but exceedingly dingy apartment, in which, as our eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, we discovered no furniture other than three common reed-mats disposed about a commonplace coffee-hearth. Light and air there was none but what struggled in at the door by which we had entered, and my companions found time to whisper comments on the inhospitable appearance of the place before our host confronted us.

Sulaiman ibn Affaisan was a stupid, flabby youth of some eighteen years of age, who had only recently been called upon to preside over the affairs of the village on the departure of his father, Sa'd ibn Affaisan, a man of considerable note in Najd, whom I had the pleasure of meeting a few days later, to take up the governorship of the Aflaj province. The unfavourable impression created upon us by the room was soon confirmed by the uncivil bearing of its lord and, though custom demanded of him that he should offer, and of us that we should accept, a round or two of

THE REMAINS OF YAMAMA WITH SAND-BILLOWS REACHING TO THE PALM-FRINGE.

coffee, we were as glad as he to terminate the proceedings when the passing of the censer gave the signal that we might depart. As we issued forth from the gloomy parlour into the bright sunlight and mounted our beasts, a titter of merriment convulsed us when Tami loudly proclaimed his disappointment at having failed to appease his incontinent hunger.

The population of the village of Sulaimiyya, including the dwellings scattered about the palm-groves, may comprise some 500 souls, mostly Qahtan of the 'Aïdh section, to which the *Amir's* family belongs. In the palm-groves I noticed patches of saffron cultivation, a few pomegranate bushes, exiguous strips of barley, vegetables of various kinds and cotton-shrubs growing sparsely along the edges of the irrigation channels.

We now passed across the breadth of the oasis, beyond whose outer wall, dotted with fallen watch-towers, lay a detached line of palms and a patch of well-grown *Ithils* perched on a low sand-ridge. Beyond this again lay a tract of sand-dunes extending from the banks of Wadi Hanifa across our front and developing gradually into a regular *Nafud* as we advanced. The air and ground around us were alive with young locusts recently hatched—*Jakhakh* as they are called at this stage, when they are not considered fit to eat by the Arabs.

A single well, newly excavated in a clearing of the *Nafud*, stood about halfway between Sulaimiyya and Yamama. Beyond it the heavy waves of sand caused us some trouble as we pursued our course slightly south of east towards the north-western corner of the latter oasis, of which but a sorry remnant still survives of the magnificence of former days. The old Yamama, capital of a great kingdom, must have spread over a considerable area in the angle formed by the junction of the Hanifa and Nisah channels. What remains of it to-day is but a solid block of palms on the side of the Nisah, perhaps a mile square with four small hamlets embedded in its midst. The rest is choked with sand, whose rolling billows extending southwards from the edge of Wadi Hanifa are only prevented from engulfing the modern settlement by a slender barrier

of palm-fronds set about its northern flank. Here and there from beneath the sea of sand to the northward peep perished ruins of palaces and roofless tenements, all of clay indeed, but betokening from their wide extent the existence in days of yore of a large and prosperous community within their walls; and here and there a deep abyss betrays a buried well set about with a parapet of cement. Beyond to the eastward all is rolling sand as far as the head of the Sahaba, where ever and anon the three great torrents join their waters in a flood capable, as local fancy paints it, of breaking through the sand-barrier of the Dahana to the sea.

Whatever may have been the cause of the destruction of Yamama, time and the turbulence of more recent years have obliterated all memory of the event, and legend alone preserves a story forgotten by the historian. That the ancient capital was no victim of plague and locusts is sufficiently obvious; the theory of desiccation falls to the ground when we remember that we are dealing with the very core of the drainage system of Central Arabia; there remains therefore naught but the assumption of a great flood to account for the sorry plight of a once great city, and careful consideration will show that such an explanation is not only plausible but inevitable. The surviving remnant of the settlement lies away from the Hanifa on the banks of the Nisah, the ruins are on the side of the former, in respect of which I have already related the tradition of a sudden catastrophe, which laid its former prosperity in ruins. Floods capable of such effects are but rare phenomena in Arabia and are exceedingly unlikely to occur simultaneously in two channels dependent on widely separated sources. Is it then not reasonable to assume that a mighty flood in the Hanifa channel was responsible not only for the ruin of the settlements in its upper reaches, but also for that of Yamama, and further to point to the disposition of the ruins of the latter as proof almost positive that such a flood is a historical fact?

From the north-western corner of the settlement we pursued our way along its northern fringe over the piled-up sand, in which here and there we noticed small groups of graves, one of which had near the inconspicuous headstone

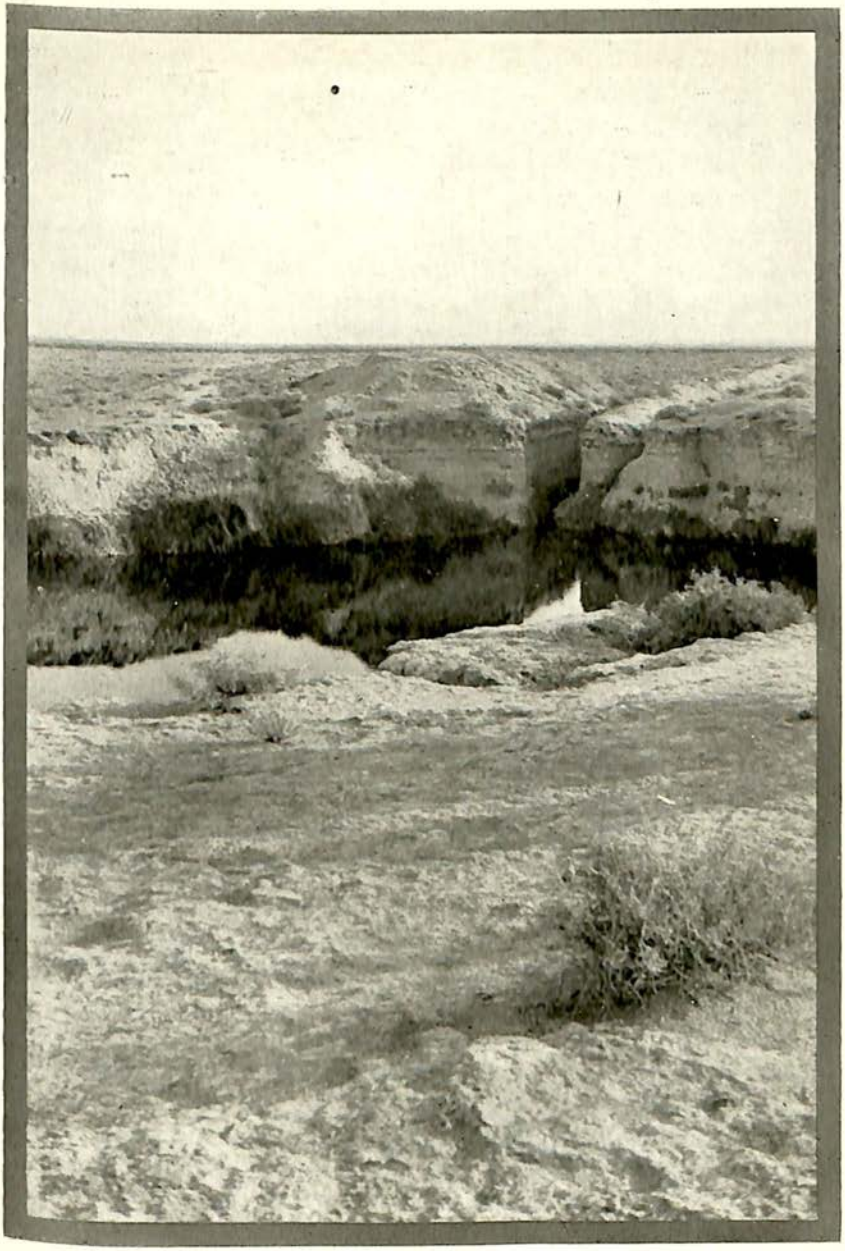
the unusual ornament of a slender cornstalk, doubtless the tribute of some recently bereaved parent or wife to a dear one not yet forgotten. From this side at about midway a lane led through a gap in the outer hedge to a clearing, in which stood the first of the four hamlets of the oasis. Beyond it and close by in a semicircle lay the other three in the midst of overshadowing palms, and our path lay through them in succession until we came to the last, situated not far from the western edge of the oasis and apparently inhabited exclusively by the *Amir* and his nearer relatives. It was here that we couched our camels to pay our respects to Ibn Fawwaz, the *Amir*, who, however, sent his son, 'Abdullah, to excuse his own absence on the ground of illness and to entertain his guests on his behalf. We were by now hungry and weary enough to appreciate the hospitality extended to us, and to do justice to the simple but ample fare produced despite our lukewarm protests; it comprised dates of excellent quality and rich curdled milk of cows, with the usual accompaniment of coffee and incense.

The kine of this neighbourhood seemed to me of a uniformly miserable and stunted growth, due no doubt to the poorness of the grazing in the near vicinity of settled habitations, where they are expected not only to supply milk but to take their part with asses and camels in the ordinary draught work of the villagers. I observed a mixed team of cows and asses treading out the corn at the threshold of the oasis, and similar teams drawing water from the wells, which are here some four or five fathoms in depth and on which alone in the absence of other sources of irrigation depends the prosperity of the settlement. The palm-groves of Yamama are denser and better than those of Sulaimiyya and boast a greater variety and profusion of subsidiary crops — cotton, saffron, egg-plant, beans, figs and pomegranates, with vines here and there and occasional corn patches for the most part on the outer fringes of the oasis. Both here and elsewhere in the Kharj district we found the corn harvest (barley and wheat) further advanced than at Riyadh, the crops having all been gathered in by this date to the threshing-floors, whereas we had left them still reaping round the capital.

The four hamlets of Yamama, each walled, but of no great dimensions, may, with the many isolated *Qasrs* scattered about the palm-groves, contain a population of about 2000 persons, drawn for the most part from three sources: the Za'b section of Al Murra, to which the *Amir* belongs; the 'Aïdh section of Qahtan, kinsmen of the people of Sulaimiyya; and the Bani Hajir. Besides their home lands the folk of this settlement own and cultivate the outlying corn lands of Al Hayathim and Al Munaisif situate a few miles to the southward in the valley of the Nisah.

Issuing from the oasis at its western edge close by the *Amir's* hamlet we now changed our course to west-south-west towards the fort of Qurain three miles distant. Soon after crossing the bed of the Nisah, which runs down along the southern fringe of Yamama to the Sahaba, we came to the ruins of an old watch-tower, known as Maftul al Saih, standing in the midst of long derelict fields. Another ruined grange half a mile farther on marked the northern extremity of an extensive tract of lucerne cultivation known either as Qurain from the fort already mentioned or more commonly as Saih from the perennial stream, which feeds it. The Qusai'a downs slope down gently from the east towards the fields, and on their outer fringe close by the right bank of the Saih channel about a mile and half upstream from its tail stands the fort, where we decided to pitch camp for the day. Westward lay the settlements of Al Hayathim and Al Munaisif backed by the Firzan ridge; southward at a distance of about three miles lay the source of the Saih stream in a remarkable group of three natural spring-fed reservoirs, the outstanding feature of the Kharj district—a feature to which it owes not only such prosperity as it has enjoyed in the past and enjoys now, but also, I feel convinced, its name.

The three reservoirs lie at no great distance apart at a point where the Qusai'a downs, bulging outward in a westerly direction, rise sharply from the plain to a ridge some hundred feet or more above its level. The first, 'Ain Samha, stands somewhat away from the foot of the slope and consists of a deep cleft in the limestone rock, oval in shape and about eighty paces by forty in dimension. The clear dark water of the pool lies some twenty feet below



'Ain Samha, one of the "bottomless" pools of Kharj.

the ground level, from which on every side the rock descends abruptly to the water's edge; a single very narrow gap—obviously the handiwork of man—at the north-west corner is the only outlet of the water into the Saih channel. 'Ain al Dhila', the second of the three, is more remarkable in that it lies in a deep fissure in the side of the hill itself, is larger and less regular in shape and is connected with the summit of the downs by a steep rocky chimney-like ravine. Its average length and breadth are about a hundred and seventy yards respectively, in shape it is very roughly circular, while its containing walls of limestone rock vary greatly in elevation above the water-level from point to point, their greatest height being about forty feet on the south and east sides, while on the north they do not exceed thirty feet and on the west the ground slopes down at an easy gradient to the water's edge. 'Ain Mukhisa, the remaining reservoir, lies rather more than half a mile to south-west of the 'Ain al Dhila' and well away from the edge of the downs. Its water is but a foot or two below ground-level, and, in contrast to the steep cliffs of the other two pools, the ground, descending gently to the water's edge, is prettily adorned with bushes, reeds and grasses; this pool is of greater dimensions than the others, being of an average length and breadth of 150 and 80 paces respectively.

A Stygian gloom broods over the still black waters of these marvellous pools in the midst of the wilderness, whose depths, they say, have never been fathomed by man. It is indeed commonly believed among the Arabs, whose curiosity has often prompted them to probe their hidden mystery, that the pools are bottomless and descend without interruption even to the subterranean sea; but having no line of sufficient length by which to check their tale or other means of exposing their credulity, I was content to share their belief, marvelling at the metallic transparency of the water, as I watched my companions diving, as all Arabs can, into its depths and frolicking therein, and followed the bubbling descent of great boulders thrown into the pools until they disappeared from view far down. All that can be said with certainty is that these great reservoirs derive their

being from some hidden spring in the bowels of the earth and that for generations—perhaps from the beginning of time—they have served to irrigate the fields of Kharj, whose unquestionable agricultural prosperity in ancient days has given rise to the popular fallacy that its name perpetuates the memory of the days, when it constituted the main source (*makhraj*) of the corn supply of Mecca and the Holy Land. We know indeed from the *Quran* and other authorities that the pressing needs of the growing population of Mecca had in pre-Islamic days necessitated the organisation of a regular caravan service to the great commercial centres of Arabia, and that the Prophet himself on many occasions participated actively in the commercial enterprises of his fellow-citizens in the direction of Syria and Damascus, and we know that there was also a brisk intercourse between Mecca and Yaman, but no evidence has come down to us in support of the theory that the district of Kharj or even the kingdom of Yamama was ever in a position to contribute substantially to the maintenance of the centre of Arabian idolatry. I would, therefore, on this ground and in view of the paltry dimensions of the Kharj district discard the explanation of its name, which has appealed to popular fancy and local pride, and substitute for it another, which presented itself to me with irresistible force at the first sight of the great water-holes, which I have just described. I have already remarked the tendency of Arab nomenclature to seize upon natural features connected with the water-supply of their desert country, and I shall have occasion in due course to show that the province of Aflaj and the district of Sirr derive their names from just such peculiarities. In these circumstances, therefore, it would not be strange or in any way extraordinary that the district in which they occur should have been named after a feature so outstanding and remarkable as these pools, but the difficulty is to reconcile the name, as it is, with the phenomena from which we would derive it. The task is, however, not so difficult as it seems, if we remember, firstly, that the pools of Kharj lie in deep clefts or fissures of the rock such as cannot fail to strike the imagination ; secondly, that in many other localities in Arabia are to be found pools

similarly situated in rock-clefts—though as a matter of fact of essentially different character—and ascribed by local imagination to the action of falling stars, whence their name *Khafs* or "*crack*"; thirdly, that in the modern pronunciation of the Arabs the J sound as often represents ق as a ج as in the proper name Jasim, generally spelt جاسم, for Qasim; and lastly, that the word *Kharq*—خرق—is a synonym for *Khafs* in the sense of "crack" or "cleave," and actually occurs in the name of the remarkable grotto-hill of Riyadh in the form Makhruq. The Arabs have so long lost that sense of language and the literary finesse, which characterised their ancestors in the days of *The Ignorance*, that we need feel no surprise at their accepting without demur an obviously untenable derivation of the name of the district of Kharj when a more plausible one is so near to seek. Time has wrought great changes in the pronunciation of the old Arabic, and the decadence of scholarship, which the *Wahhabi* revival of modern times has done nothing to arrest, has allowed the pen to follow the tongue with results, which, though deplorable in the eyes of the classical student, are not without interest for the student of the development of languages. There is so far as I can see no practical or etymological objection to the theory that the name Kharj is derived from *Kharq* denoting a "cleft," and that the district therefore derived its name from the pools, which now, as in past days, are its most striking feature. The theory involves a change of spelling—if classical precision be sought—but none of pronunciation, and not only satisfies every applicable canon, but derives strong support from the analogy of such district-names as Sirr and Aflaj.

Two of these pools have, however, ceased to function, being, as the Arabs say, dead. For some reason or other the springs, which used to feed the two larger pools, have ceased to work or perhaps have found some subterranean outlet, with the result that their water-level falls somewhat short of the canal-heads still visible in their sides and 'Ain Samha alone continues to perform a task it once shared with its fellows. The Saih channel has its head, as I have already remarked, in the north-west corner of this pool at a depth

of about twenty feet below the ground-level and flows thence in a northerly direction, irrigating as it goes, for some four or five miles. In former days it was also connected with the 'Ain al Dhila' and 'Ain Mukhisa pools by aqueducts of the *Kariz* pattern still extant in a ruinous condition. These channels are all cut through the limestone rock of the higher ground, from which the Saih emerges on to the plain at ground-level to follow the natural slope of the land towards the depression of the Nisah valley.

Though irrigation from the 'Uyun Kharj or springs of Kharj, as these reservoirs are collectively named, must have been practised here by the earliest settlers of the district, it seems to me probable that the actual canal system, which has survived to our times, must, like that of Firzan, be the handiwork of a comparatively recent Persian colony. The use of the *Kariz* is strong evidence of that, and here, too, we find a counterpart to the circular ruins already described. Ascending the slope of the downs in the neighbourhood of 'Ain al Dhila' I was gratified to find the summit thickly littered with cairn-like piles of *débris*, which, though less striking than the well-marked masonry remains of Firzan, showed nevertheless signs of symmetrical arrangement, such as one might expect to find in a settlement of civilised folk or in a cemetery or the like, and by their situation on the higher ground forcibly demonstrated their un-Arab origin. For the rest the circles seemed to be of more uniform dimensions, not exceeding ten yards in diameter in any case and consisted of piles, varying from three to five feet in height, not of rocks, as in the case of Firzan, but of small pieces of the calcareous limestone, of which the hill itself is composed, and of gypsum mortar. There is a patch of ruins also immediately to the west of 'Ain Mukhisa on the level plain, but these were wholly of clay and gypsum and may well have been the remains of an ordinary Arab settlement of modern times.

The cultivated area dependent on the Saih stream extends some four miles from south to north with an average breadth of perhaps one mile and forms part of the Crown domains of Ibn Sa'ud, who has devoted it exclusively to the service of the royal stables established by him here for the accom-

modation, maintenance and protection of his brood mares, stallions and such other horses as are not required for the time being for the use of himself and his family in peace or war. Built as a fort as a necessary precaution against surprise attacks, the *Qasr* of Qurain is an oblong building of clay, 150 yards by 100 yards in extent; it is surrounded by a high wall with several towers at intervals on each side and has a formidable projecting gateway on the west side. The interior is divided by a cross-wall into two sections; that on the south side, to which the main gate gives admission, being 100 by 50 yards in area and containing the necessary store-rooms and accommodation for the resident steward and his family and the grooms under his command; the other, to which admission is obtained through an opening in the cross-wall, being a large square occupying the remainder of the fort and divided into two open paddocks separated by a pathway with low mud walls on either side. At the northern end is a well four fathoms deep with a large flat earthen drinking-trough attached to it. Each paddock is furnished with rows of circular mud mangers, in which lucerne, brought from the plantation, is piled high twice a day, and to which the horses are loosely tethered, while round the walls runs a flimsy shed in which the animals are placed for protection against the sun during the hours of greatest heat. At the time of my visit there were some fifty animals in the building—five or six fine stallions, a dozen promising young stock, the rest mares of varying quality with a couple of camels and a mule to keep them company. So far as I could see, the animals never receive any sort of grooming or attention; they are never exercised, and are never on any account allowed to leave the building; the paddocks are cleared of refuse only at long intervals, and all day long the wretched beasts—the pick of the stock of Najd—stand at their mangers in ever-growing heaps of litter and manure, browsing at their rich fodder. Nevertheless they suffer less than one might expect from this extraordinary treatment, and when they go forth to war their skins are glossy and their capacity to endure fatigue and privation seems unimpaired, but one malady I noticed to be exceedingly prevalent, a curious and extremely dis-

figuring but otherwise apparently harmless affection, which they call *Dabbas* and attribute to the action of a parasite imported with the lucerne. This ailment is said to confine itself exclusively to the white colour, and from the examination of the animals present in the fort I can bear witness to the accuracy of this assertion, for the whites and greys among them were unsightly masses of the open blotchy sores, which are the symptom of the disease, while animals of any other colour were wholly immune except only those unfortunate enough to exhibit spots, streaks or even single hairs of white, and these were affected only where such blemishes occurred. From the steward of the stables and the other Arabs with me no explanation was forthcoming of this ailment at once so uncompromising in its hostility to whiteness and so powerless to affect any other shade of colour, but they were confident enough in their assurances that no permanent ill-effect has ever been known to ensue from its attacks except the impairing of the eyesight in the case of animals affected in the neighbourhood of their eyes. Whether veterinary experts are familiar with the affection or not or by what name they know it I cannot say, but I may here remark that when some months later at Baghdad I mentioned the matter to Daud Beg Daghistani, an enthusiastic breeder and lover of horses, he professed to be aware of the disease and gave it some other name, which I have unfortunately forgotten.

Lucerne is the only crop grown in the fields of Qurain and forms the staple, indeed almost the sole, diet of the occupants of the stable, which rarely enjoy a feed of barley. Young stock of great promise are often greatly pampered in the period of their development, and I have known yearlings take unkindly even to barley after being brought up on camel's milk and dates, as is the practice in the stables of 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi at Hufuf. The soft *Nussi* grass of the desert ranks second in the horse's dietary in Arabia after lucerne.

3. Southern Kharj

From 'Ain Mukhisa on the morning of the 9th May we struck out in a westerly direction over a dreary tract of

soft salt-impregnated soil, which separates the wreckage of once prosperous Yamama from a group of flourishing settlements, where, in spite of adverse conditions and unceasing strife during the closing decades of last century, the patient industry of the people has sought to build up again on a modest scale the agricultural and commercial activity for which their district was once famous in Arabia.

A narrow sandy channel, traversing this bare plain under the name of Wadi Saih, betrays the last fitful efforts of the great 'Ajaimi torrent to reach its natural outlet at the head of the Sahaba, and a mile or so beyond it we came to the first and most recent settlement of modern Kharj. Here on the site of a ruined hamlet of recent times and in the midst of an extensive area of scattered corn lands interspersed with patches of well-grown *Ithil* trees stands the village of Dhaba'a, one of the newest of the many colonies established by Ibn Sa'ud in his territories for the furtherance of the *Ikhwan* movement. At the time of our visit scarce twelve months had passed since the advance guard of the Bani 'Amir section of the Subai', to whom the tract had been allotted by Ibn Sa'ud, had marked their arrival on the scene by laying the foundations of a pretentious mosque, whose elegant frontage of seventeen pointed arches of typical *Wahhabi* pattern contrasted strangely with the miserable collection of small square-built mud huts erected to the number of a hundred or more in its neighbourhood without order or symmetry for the accommodation of the inhabitants themselves. The cost of the construction of the mosque had, as is usual in such cases, been met out of State funds, and its proportions suggest that it was designed for the service of a larger congregation than the village, as it then stood, could provide; but the latter was admittedly in an embryo stage and Ibn Sa'ud certainly contemplated its rapid growth, as he gave me an estimate of 500 able-bodied men of military age as its population, and was said to have distributed 300 rifles for the use of the community. Its recognised heads were Mubarak ibn Dulaim, Faris ibn Raqis and Ghunaim ibn Hudaihid, all of the Bani 'Amir section, whose expulsion from the neighbourhood of Khurma in Western Najd by the Bani Thaur I have noticed in an

earlier section [1] of this narrative. The present population of Dhaba'a I would reckon to be not more than 500 souls, but there may be as many as 1500 more awaiting an opportunity of fixing their abode here, as soon as the progress of breaking up the land for cultivation and of building is sufficiently advanced to assure them livelihood and accommodation; in the meantime they wander with their flocks as heretofore. There are as yet no palms here, but I passed by many a flourishing plot of ground planted with pomegranate bushes, cotton, saffron, onions and the like, while the barley crop, to judge from the area of stubble, seemed to have been ample. Water appeared to be abundant throughout the settlement, and the *Ithil* patches will provide as much timber as the people may require for their building.

Barely half a mile to the south of Dhaba'a and divided from it by the narrow torrent-bed of Sha'ib al 'Ain, which descends from the neighbouring slopes of Tuwaiq through a wood of *Ithil* called Raudha Ghuraifa three miles to the west, lie the village and oasis of Na'jan. An earlier site of this village was pointed out to me in a small group of ruins to our left, and the modern settlement, though of small dimensions, struck me as being prosperous enough. The village is exceedingly compact and oblong in shape, measuring only 120 paces by 70, but surrounded by a lofty, thick-set wall of clay with only a single entrance on the west side. It may have a population of 300 souls all told and stands in a clearing in one of the two groups of palms of which the oasis consists.

In 1903 or 1904 'Abdul'aziz ibn Rashid, on the occasion of an abortive attempt to make himself master of Kharj, made a sudden descent upon Na'jan, and overpowering its few defenders lay up with his army in the dense palm-groves of the oasis preparatory to an attack on Dilam, the capital of the district, which lies some four miles to the south, on the morrow. The townsfolk, despairing of their ability to withstand his assault, managed to convey intelligence of his arrival and intentions to Riyadh, whereupon Ibn Sa'ud set forth without delay with a hastily mustered force and passing wide of his rival's camp unknown to the latter

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 167.

reached the oasis of Dilam and posted his men in ambush along its fringes before the break of dawn. Ibrahim, who in those days was in the service of Ibn Rashid and was of the attacking force, related to me how with all confidence of victory the Shammar forces advanced at early dawn over the open fields of Muhammadi, which intervened between them and their prey, and how, congratulating themselves on the rapidity and secrecy with which their chief had executed his plan of campaign, they had reached to within a few yards of the edge of the apparently undefended palm-groves, when they were received with volley upon volley of rifle-fire as withering as it was unexpected. They fled incontinently, leaving a large number of dead on the field, while Ibn Sa'ud, collecting a considerable force of local warriors, whom his dramatic appearance and striking victory had drawn from their hiding-places, pursued hot-foot on the track of the retreating forces of Ibn Rashid, who, abandoning all his stores and other *impedimenta*, sought safety in headlong flight up the valley of the Sulaiy to his own territories. Kharj was saved and has never since been the object of Ibn Rashid's attentions.

Dilam, the present capital of the Kharj district, comprises, besides the township of that name, a considerable tract of cultivated land, which falls naturally into two sections—the oasis of Dilam itself and the corn lands of Muhammadi. The latter, lying between the former and Na'jan, consists of a large area of fertile loam, the whole of which, roughly, as I computed it, some 2500 acres in extent, is dotted with *Qasrs* and wells and devoted, with the exception of a few small palm-groves at the extremity adjoining the oasis, to the cultivation of wheat and barley. The crops had been garnered in before our passage through this tract, but the scattered threshing-floors, piled high with grain and chaff, bore testimony to the excellence of the recent harvest. These lands belong for the most part to residents of Dilam, but the *Qasrs*, perhaps a hundred in number, accommodate a permanent population of servants and workmen, who may number 1000 souls or more or less. The water-level in the wells varies from six to seven fathoms. A narrow strip of sand separates its northern fringe from Na'jan,

while it is bounded on the east by the Qusai'a downs about a mile distant and on the west by an outcrop of rocky hills called Abu Walad and Khashm al Kalb. Its southern boundary is conterminous with the northern fringe of the oasis, a solid block of palm-groves interspersed with frequent open plots of corn and vegetables and extending some two miles from north to south and about a mile across. It derives its great fertility from the fact that it lies athwart the confluence of many streams from the slopes of Tuwaiq with the Sha'ib Saut from Hauta and the 'Ajaimi, whose progress is here impeded by the outlying dunes of a narrow strip of high *Nafud* called 'Arq Dhahi, which masks the outer face of the Qusai'a downs and reaches to the eastern extremity of the palms. I found it quite impossible in the course of our progress through the heart of the oasis to disentangle the complicated network of watercourses into its component parts, but it is sufficient for an understanding of the drainage system of the country to realise that it is in Dilam that the 'Ajaimi receives its last important accession of strength before it disappears in the Sahaba. The wells of Dilam, six to seven fathoms deep, like those of Muhammadi, are largely worked by camels—an outward and visible sign of prosperity, which is more than confirmed by the great density of the groves and by the rich profusion of subsidiary crops, for which there is a ready market in the town. Cotton is here plentiful though still grown only on the borders of groves and fields; vegetables of many kinds abound; and fruit is found in plenty, pomegranates, grapes, melons, lemons, figs, apricots, peaches and the like.

Here and there scattered about the oasis are small groups of houses, scarce worthy the name of hamlets, and isolated *Qasrs*, but the population of the place is for the most part concentrated in the town or *Hilla*, as it is called, situated on the east side of the palm-block in a deep indentation thereof. Surrounded by strong walls, rising to a height of twenty-five feet and crowned at each corner and at intervals elsewhere by bastions, the town spreads over a considerable area, forming a hexagon, whose measurements are as follows: north wall 510 paces with a gateway at a distance of 130 paces from its east end and with bastions at each end

and two others between them; west wall 400 paces with two gateways a short distance apart near its centre and with bastions at each end and over each gate; south wall 530 paces with a bastioned gateway about 240 paces from the east end and bastions at each end; east wall 320 paces with three bastions; and finally, two walls forming an L, and connecting the extremities of the north and east walls, that from north to south measuring 170, and that from east to west 100 paces. There is no outlet to the town on the eastern side, where its flank is completely exposed towards the *Nafud*. Internally the framework of the town is very simple and regular, a long street connecting the gates on the north and south sides, and being itself connected with the two gates on the west side by lateral streets, while a number of subsidiary lanes connect every part of the town with one or other of these thoroughfares. An imposing fort occupies the whole of the south-east corner of the town, parts of whose south and east walls form the outer walls of the fortress and are connected to complete the enclosure by inner walls of similar length, the one built out from the south gate along the edge of the main street and the other connecting its northern extremity to the point of the east wall opposite it. A considerable open space, which intervenes between the northern face of the fort and the dwellings on that side, and extends from the main street to the east wall, serves as a market-place for the people whose requirements are also met by a number of shops both in the main street and its lateral connections with the western gates. The *Jami'* or great mosque aligns the main street near the south gate and stands nearly opposite to the entrance to the fort; other mosques are dotted about the town, whose remaining space is occupied by dwelling-houses for the most part of two storeys, well built and extraordinarily, even extravagantly, spacious. An unmistakable air of affluence pervades the whole place, whose denizens are credited with a full share of smug fanaticism and self-complacent bigotry. They may be as many as 8000 souls, including the inhabitants of the isolated hamlets and *Qasrs*, the greater number being of the Dawasir tribe with some admixture of Bani Tamim, Qahtan, negroes, etc.

My presence at their gates was a source of patent but passive disapproval to the community at large, but the *Amir*, Nasir ibn 'Abdullah, a *Dausari*, on receiving from Ibrahim a letter of recommendation from Ibn Sa'ud, treated me with much courtesy and consideration, allowed me every facility for inspecting the town and its surroundings and entertained my following and myself in the spacious coffee-parlour of the fort both on our first arrival, when we went to pay him our formal respects, and again in the evening. On the latter occasion he allowed me to ascend to the roof of the building to view the town, while the rest betook themselves to the mosque for the sunset prayer. For a brief space a deep silence enveloped the place, broken only by the tuneful intonations of the priests and the sonorous choruses of the congregations in half-a-dozen mosques; the streets were utterly deserted, but I observed that little groups of women were gathered on the neighbouring house-tops here and there watching with wondering curiosity the infidel stranger who prayed not at the appointed hour.

The *Amir* of Dilam, besides presiding over the affairs of his own town, exercises a general control over the *Amirs* of the other villages of Kharj, more particularly in cases of inter-parochial disputes and in matters affecting the welfare of the district as a whole, while he is invested with the sole responsibility for the administration of the *Badawin* area. He is never called *Amir* of Kharj, but, though only *primus inter pares* in relation to the other *Amirs*, enjoys something of the dignity and consideration which would attach to such an office in virtue of the greater importance of his special charge and of the special powers and responsibilities with which he is invested. As a *Badawin* centre the district is both a difficult and an important administrative charge on account of its being the meeting-ground of several not always harmonious elements, to wit, the Dawasir, who occupy the 'Ajaimi valley, the Shamir of the 'Alaiya section of Tuwaiq, and the Suhul and Subai' of the Wadi Hanifa area. All work of a purely judicial character falls upon the *Qadhi* of the district, who also has his seat at Dilam, and the *Amir* is only responsible to countersign and execute his decrees, whether in criminal or civil cases, while the collection

of the *Zakat* or revenue and all other work, executive or administrative, devolves upon the *Amir*, whose commission is as wide as it is simple, namely to decide all cases, if he can, at his discretion and to refer only those, which he finds himself unable to dispose of, to headquarters at Riyadh.

Our camp was pitched just outside the town at its south-west corner on a strip of sandy ground between the local cemetery and an isolated patch of corn-land surrounded by a hedge of *Ithil*. Here, as we assembled for the midday meal under the awning, which was always pitched for my following during any prolonged halt in the heat of the day, Ibrahim introduced me to a young *Dausari*, Muhammad by name, a youth of some eighteen summers, who had just presented himself at our camp in the hope of disposing of a couple of sheep, which he had brought all the way from the tents of his section on the distant 'Arma plateau and had failed to sell in the town, whence our emissaries had returned without being able to procure meat for the onward journey. In all the time I spent in Arabia I never saw a man of such physical perfection as this lad, whose features were delicately chiselled as a woman's, whose body was lithe and supple and strong as a stag's, and whose speech and manner were frank and pleasing with no trace of the bigotry, which, at any rate in the land of the *Wahhabis*, the stranger within their gates so frequently finds a bar to rapid intimacy. He had come thus far laboriously to earn a few dollars by the disposal of his sheep, but hearing that we purposed to journey towards the Aflaj and were in need of some one well acquainted with the country through which we must pass he volunteered to accompany us as guide and was immediately enrolled as one of our party. Thereafter during the few days he remained with us he was ever at my side, more than earning the gratuity he received on the termination of his engagement by the mass of information he imparted to me about the districts we traversed, of which he knew every inch.

In the evening, as I wandered round our camp before the last glow of light had faded from the sky, I observed four women, each bearing a pitcher full of water, repair to a certain spot in the cemetery where a grave had been newly dug

out in the sand. They were, I was told, the precursors of the burial party itself—their business being to make mud bricks wherewith to cover the groove in which the corpse itself is laid, before the earth is shovelled into the grave. In this country graves are dug out to a depth of between four and five feet in the case of men and a foot deeper for women, the diggers estimating the requirements in either case roughly in relation to their own stature, breast high for males and scalp high for females, the reason generally given for this distinction between the sexes being that, only the father, brother, or other near relation being permitted to look upon a woman even in death, the extra depth ensures that no casual passer-by of the male sex shall inadvertently view the corpse as it lies in the grave. This being dug to the required depth the bottom is further scooped out in the centre so as to form the groove already mentioned; into this groove they lower the body, which they dispose on its side with head to the northward and face turned towards the *Qibla*. Corpses of both sexes are clad all over in white raiment, headkerchief or *Qatra*, shirt or *Thaub*, and pantaloons or *Sirwal*, the whole so sewn together that every part of the body—hands, feet and face—is concealed from view, the only exception they make being in the case of children, whose faces are partly exposed. The corpse being in position and covered by a layer of mud bricks laid over the groove, the grave is filled in and the earth pressed down and sprinkled with water in such manner that it projects only a few inches above ground level. At this stage a further distinction is made between the sexes in that, while men's graves are marked at the extremities by head- and foot-stones, those of women are distinguished by an extra stone half-way between the two. This act of differentiation, so inconsistent with the general principles of *Wahhabi* puritanism, seems to me to mark a very near approach to superstition, and the only explanation of it I ever heard was that, women being in death as in life more flighty and unstable than men, their souls require a heavier weight to keep them down in the grave, and if this precaution were neglected would return to plague their forgetful husbands. If such indeed be the case, it is not strange that it should be so among

simple and ignorant folk, who, for all the assurances of a dogmatic creed, cannot be expected to divest themselves of every vestige of the fears and superstitions inherited from their pagan ancestry.

We were up betimes the following morning and moved off with a fresh northerly breeze behind us. My thermometer, which had registered as little as 53° Fahrenheit the previous morning, now recorded 57° at 4 A.M., but at this season the hours of coolth are all too short and the latter part of our morning marches were generally weary enough. As we drew away from the edge of the oasis, whose southern section of palms is known by the name of 'Idhar, our course lay parallel to the 'Arq Dhahi over a broad plain, showing at intervals signs of cultivation, and bounded on the western side by the ridges of Khashm al Kalb and Abu Khayala backed in the distance by the Sha'ara ridge and the dim coast of Jabal 'Alaiya. Scattered *Qasrs* dotted the plain on our left towards 'Arq Dhahi, behind which rose the rugged cliff of Buhaith, a continuation of the Qusai'a ridge. Our course lay near or through three isolated palm clumps: Bulaisa two miles from our starting-point; Zumaiqa half a mile farther on, and comprising a small walled village surrounded by ruined habitations and thin patches of palms with a considerable area of corn-land about them; and finally, Furaih, the most southerly settlement of Kharj, for Mushairifa a mile beyond it to westward of our course is now nothing but a group of ruins.

After two hours' marching we entered the *Nafud*, which here runs out obliquely into the plain and is copiously clothed with bushes of *Ghadha*. The sand here is deep and thrown up into a series of high, bare hillocks, between two of the greatest of which our path crossed the summit of the *Nafud* and descended abruptly to two considerable but shallow pools of ponded flood-water known as Khabar al Kudan, a favourite resort of the *Badawin* and said to be permanent features in the landscape. Surrounded by sand on all sides these pools, measuring roughly 100 by 50 paces and 50 by 50 paces respectively, are fed by a backwater of the 'Ajaimi, which flows down between the eastern edge of the sands and the steep sandstone cliff of Al Daghara until blocked by a barrier

of sand which connects the two. I was not able to ascertain definitely whether this channel was the remnant of an old branch of the 'Ajaimi, which may have penetrated through the Qusai'a downs and joined Sha'ib Thulaima, which drains them into the Sahaba at some point below its head, but the consensus of opinion was certainly to this effect. The Thulaima is without doubt the centre of the drainage system of the downs, two of its tributaries being Sha'ib Abal Dharr and Sha'ib Jid'an, which were represented to me as flowing down to it from the farther side of the Daghara cliff. We halted to draw water at the pools where some shepherds of the Dawasir were watering their flocks.

We now followed the edge of the *Nafud* for some two miles, passing at that point out of the sands on to a stretch of sun-cracked clay intervening between them and the cliff. In the neighbourhood of the pools we had observed a herd of gazelles making off across the sand-hills and sand-grouse in plenty wheeling down to and away from the water, but our passage of this locality will ever be associated in my mind with the myriads of crickets—the Arabs call them *Wijwij*—which infested the *Ghadhà* bushes and whirred about us as we rode through them, settling on our clothing and on our camels with never a pause in their shrill music.

We were not yet done with the wonders of Kharj, for at the foot of the Daghara cliff, to which they now led me, I found two clefts in the rock: the one but little interesting, as, though it is said to have been full of water in former times, and measured thirty paces in length and twenty across, the greater part of it is now filled in with rock *débris* from the cliff-side; but the second, lying but a few yards to the right of the first, and known as Khafs Daghara in token of the belief that it was formed by the falling of a star, was a remarkable phenomenon. It is a yawning chasm in the hill-side, which forms an arch over its inner half while the rest of it is encircled by a wall of rock descending abruptly some 40 feet to the level of the clear, black, but partly scum-covered water which fills the hole. The pool is roughly circular with a diameter of some seventy yards, and around it on the side away from the hill are set up seven *Maqams* or posts furnished with pulleys for the drawing up of water.

Under the arch the Arabs, ever curious to probe such mysteries, have discovered a tunnel, which starts from below water-level and leads up into the bowels of the hill, whither no one has yet succeeded in finding out.

Before us now stretched the southern triangle of Kharj, in which is neither habitation nor cultivation but only the valley of the 'Ajaimi and the petty channels joining it from the rapidly converging ridges on either side. On the west lay the crags of Sha'ara and Umm al Riyasha with Tuwaiq in the background, while on the east an outcrop of *Nafud* called Hulaiwa stood in echelon with the Fazzar and Khartam ridges, at whose farthest extremity the magnificent headland of Khashm Khartam projected boldly towards the bulging line of Tuwaiq, marking the point at which the 'Ajaimi descends from the uplands beyond into the basin of Kharj. The sands of 'Arq Dhahi end opposite Khafs Daghara in a conspicuous sand-peak known as Mabda al Khafs, but a low strip of sand-dunes called 'Arq Murdasiyya, through which we passed, connects it loosely with the extremity of the Hulaiwa *Nafud*, allowing, however, a passage for the Sha'ib Nu'aiyim, which descends between the latter and the Daghara ridge to join the 'Ajaimi.

We traversed the plain, now bare and stony, now covered with *Rimdh* tufts and acacias, for some hours, and after a welcome halt in the bed of Sha'ib Artawiyya during the heat of the day, resumed our march over the same monotonous scene in the afternoon. As we approached the apex of the triangle the plain became more broken and cut up by the torrent-channels of petty tributaries of the 'Ajaimi; these we crossed one after another, the Nuhaidid, the Mutairiyya, the Dahla, the Khuwaish, until at length we came to the narrow opening through which the 'Ajaimi pours down its waters in flood-time.

At this point the narrowed interval between Tuwaiq and the Khartam ridge, which marks the western limits of the great Biyadh desert, is spanned by the Samariyat, a dreary wedge of barren downs, which projects eastward from the Tuwaiq slope. The bold headland of Khashm Khartam towered majestically above us at the southern extremity of its ridge, which thereafter runs eastward. The

'Ajaimi, carrying the drainage of the uplands beyond, forces its way through this barrier in a narrow winding channel steeply inclined to the head of the plain, where amid the encircling rocks a many-armed bay has been formed by the eddying torrent, in which a profusion of vegetation and groups of stout acacias bear witness to a long succession of life-giving floods, whose passage through the gorge must indeed be a magnificent spectacle. Four times had they descended in the season just closed, and no more water could be looked for till the coming winter. From the head of the gorge upwards our march next day followed the meandering of the channel, whose sandy, pebble-strewn bed lay between well-marked banks, averaging about four feet in height and not more than thirty to forty yards apart, but it was already late in the afternoon when we arrived at this point and we were well content to pitch our camp for the night under the shelter of the precipitous cliffs of the Khashm, whose summit must have been some 500 or 600 feet above us.

While the camels were being driven out to graze and our men hastened hither and thither in search of fuel for our fire, I betook myself with Mitrak and Muhammad to the summit of a little knoll not far distant, whence I enjoyed a good view of what we had left behind and of what lay before us for the morrow. The Kharj district was now done with so far as we were concerned and its settlements were hidden from view by the sands of 'Arq Dhahi, at whose hither end the great dune of Mabda al Khafs stood out a prominent landmark. But the great upland plain, which opened out before us to the southward, must be considered in connection with this stage of our journey, if only for the reason that it comprises the whole of the upper valley of the 'Ajaimi and extends to the watershed between the Sahaba drainage system and that of the Aflaj. Seen from the vantage point we had selected, the plain appeared as a vast oval perhaps twenty miles across at its broadest point and completely hemmed in by hills. Behind us stood Khashm Khartam with the Khartam ridge extending from it eastward to a short double-peaked ridge called Al Quraibain curving round to the south and ending in the low rounded hill of

Umm al 'Adhman. From the extremity of the latter the line was taken up by the low cliff of Al Hulailiyyat inclining slightly to the west from a point due south of us towards a headland called Khashm Daghama, in echelon with which beyond lay the distant headland of Khashm al Mishash at the end of a low southward-trending ridge, which appeared in the distance to meet the curve of the outer slopes of Tuwaiq, which bound the valley on its eastern side from the Samariyat beside us to the limit of our vision. A low mound here and there broke the level monotony of the plain, which extended before us to a distance of nearly forty miles, and promised a dreary enough journey ere we should pass beyond it.

On our first arrival at the confines of Kharj, our *Dausari* guide, Muhammad, of the newly wedded wife,[1] had obtained my permission to pay a flying visit to his bride wandering in the neighbourhood with her own people until such time as her husband should have leisure to take her off to her new home. He appeared to have had no difficulty in finding the object of his quest or keeping himself informed of our movements, for, though our programme had been left entirely dependent on circumstances, he had rejoined us during the course of the day's march much gratified at his unexpected holiday and unabashed by the outburst of good-humoured ribaldry which greeted his return. Tami, as an experienced old *roué*, took the lead in a running bombardment of the broadest scurrilities and scored heavily by pointing out, as evidence of an enjoyable honeymoon, two mudstains on his shift over the shoulder-blades. Muhammad had evidently found his bride to his liking, and having told her of the errand on which he was engaged, had been primed by her, for my benefit, with a long list of the deficiencies of his wardrobe and hers.

Next morning we resumed our march up the 'Ajaimi valley, in which the recent floods had left still unobliterated signs of their passage not only in the lush herbage which adorned the banks of the channel, but in occasional pools of water, beside one of which we rested in the shade of a considerable clump of *Ithils* and acacias to consume a

[1] *Vide* p. 17 *supra*.

sumptuous breakfast of cold mutton and rice prepared overnight. It was yet early in the day and we had marched about nine miles, our course, which now followed and now cut across the curves of the channel, crossing at intervals the first two of many regular camel tracks, which radiate from the vicinity of Hauta towards the Biyadh desert, whither the grass-cutters go forth in search of fodder for the cattle of Hauta and Hilwa. One of these follows the line of Sha'ib Umm al 'Adhman, which descends from the hill of the same name and is the only considerable affluent of the 'Ajaimi up to this point. It was near here, too, that we observed the tracks of a pair of wolves, which had remained some time disporting themselves in the sandy bed of the channel after drinking of the pool by which we were halted.

Five miles farther up the valley, having passed the openings of three small affluents of the 'Ajaimi—the Khuraisa from the east and the Maz'ab and Hazamiyya from the west—we came to the first of three *Ghadirs* or water-holes known collectively as Ghadran Halfawi from the Sha'ib Halfawi, which joins the 'Ajaimi a little farther up from the southward, where it rises at the foot of Khashm al Mishash. We now diverged finally from the line of the 'Ajaimi, which runs up in a south-westerly direction towards Tuwaiq, and struck out over a bare, gritty, undulating plain, leaving the second *Ghadir*, situated at the junction of the Halfawi and 'Ajaimi, away to our right and heading for the third and largest of the trio, whose position was indicated by a line of acacias some distance in front of us in the bed of the former stream.

There was little enough in our surroundings to invite delay and I hoped to make the *Ghadir* for our midday halt, and to be by nightfall in a position whence we could confidently count on reaching the confines of the Aflaj by the evening of the morrow. But my hopes were vain, for the spirits of my companions drooped as the heat increased, and I soon found myself with only a few companions far ahead of the lagging caravan. Nevertheless I pushed on affecting not to notice the unmistakable indications of a general desire to repose, and it was not till I showed signs of disregarding a small but sufficiently tempting patch of tall

acacias by the way-side that the climax came. I was already well past the spot when Ibn Jilham overtook me to plead for a halt: "*Hadha ahsan li'l maqil*," he said, "*w'al ma ba'id, ya Sahib, khallina nanzil bihadha wa nastarih wa namrih al ma.*" [1] But Muhammad had already assured me that the *Ghadir* was not far distant, and fearing that my hopes of passing well beyond it, unless we reached it before the midday halt, were doomed to disappointment I withstood the appeal and left Ibn Jilham to return crestfallen to his companions to report my decision. Counsels of open rebellion now prevailed and the laggers with one accord turned aside to the selected spot. "*Ya Sahib*," shouted Ibrahim, seeking to overawe me by an ultimatum, "*naqaiyil bihadha.*" [2] "*Qaiyilu antum bikaifakum*," I replied, turning in my saddle but without checking, "*wa ana w'alli ma'i bikaifina.*" [3] At the moment I was a considerable distance away from the others, alone and clearly in a minority of one, but I was not sorry that the inevitable breach between Ibrahim and myself, postponed for want of occasion during our leisurely progress through Kharj, had arisen out of an act of open defiance on his part. I held on in company with Mitrak, who, after Muhammad had failed to shake me, had been sent by Ibrahim to induce me to return, until, having distanced the rebels by a mile, I deemed it inexpedient to proceed any farther, both because it is a sound maxim of Arabian travel that watering-places in the desert should not be approached except with due circumspection and proper precautions, and because the sight of grazing herds in the offing betokened the presence in our neighbourhood of Dawasir shepherds. We couched our camels on the bare plain, and spreading out our bedding under the inadequate shade of a single acacia, prepared to spend the hot hours of the day where we were, with only the remains of the water I had in my water-bottle which the two of us shared alike, while I had the additional solace of my pipe. Mitrak, as fond as any one of the good things of life, but inured to every

[1] "This is better for the midday halt and the water is afar off, Sir; let us dismount here and rest and we shall make the water by evening."

[2] "We are going to halt here."

[3] "Halt as you please; and I and whoso is with me as we please."

kind of hardship by the vicissitudes of his rough career, manfully supported the absence of coffee, which indeed he volunteered to fetch from the other camp, and we spent the afternoon between conversation and sleep, while the two Muhammads took it in turns to be with us and the main body.

It was not till 3 P.M., when the thermometer registered nearly 104°, that my slumbers were disturbed by the arrival of Ibrahim and the rest of them at our resting-place and the passage of the *Hamla*, which it was our usual custom to send somewhat ahead of us from a *Maqil* to ensure its arrival at our evening halting-place before us. I did not, however, show that I was aware of their presence, and feigning sleep the better to hear their conversation, had the pleasure of hearing much talk about my unreasonableness. At length I sat up as from a refreshing sleep, and expressing my surprise at their arrival, asked Mitrak to have my tent pitched and coffee prepared, and while the necessary steps were being taken to that end, I addressed myself to the assembly. "What say you," I began, "to your conduct of to-day seeing that Ibn Sa'ud, when taking leave of me, gave explicit orders to Ibrahim and Ibn Jilham that they were responsible for my safety and comfort, were on no account to leave me alone and were to obey my orders as if they were his own? Yet, when you had the choice between following me or Ibrahim, with one accord you followed him; by so doing you have acknowledged him as the head of this expedition and not me; so be it, but henceforth look to him for bounty and not to me. But why have you all come to me now? and what do you intend to do? I want none of you and am content with the decision that we shall move independently of each other and camp apart. Go on if you wish to whither you will, you and Ibrahim, but I have decided to stay here for the night. Your greed and sloth urge you to halt while it is yet cool enough to march; and now that you have had your fill of food and sleep, you are anxious to move on though it be the hottest hour of the day. And all this solicitude to halt you pretend to be on behalf of the camels, which found nothing to graze on at your *Maqil* and which

yet you wish to ride over the burning plain at the hottest time. Please yourselves, but I stay here for the night, and the camels at any rate will have no ground for complaint. But that is not all ; I call you to witness, Tami, that when we were at Taïf and Jidda I confided to you how much I had suffered at the hands of Ibrahim during the march thither, and that again before we started on this journey I told you of my fears that he would again prove troublesome. You, however, undertook to see that that did not occur, and yet on the first possible opportunity my words have come true. It is he that has misled you all and he will do the same again ; so let us not go on until we have decided whether his wishes are to be followed or mine. Let him lead by all means and I will follow until this journey be done, but look to him and not to me for profit, and Ibn Sa'ud shall judge between us at the end."

With that I retired to my tent ignoring the efforts made to appease my wrath and the appeals of the company for a resumption of the march. Mitrak and Muhammad alone ventured near me during the afternoon, the latter bringing me a little gazelle, but a day old, which they had picked up on the march. The little brute defied all our efforts to feed him with milk, and amused me by its rebellious efforts to escape from the halter which secured it to a peg within the tent, but for all the diversion that it caused in the camp I decided that it would be the better for the future of our enterprise if I maintained the attitude of disapproval which I had adopted especially towards our leaders, and after the evening meal, which we partook of in strained silence, I withdrew to the solitude of my tent, wondering what effect the storm, which had arisen out of the incidents of the day, would have on our future proceedings. Ibrahim at any rate had something to ruminate on in my public attack on him, for which, after all, he had only himself to thank, and I was resolved to pursue the matter to a decision, confident that the Arab's natural aversion to the prolongation of painful incidents would at least contribute to the achievement of my purpose, namely reasonable expedition on the march especially over the more dreary portions of the long journey before us.

I proved to be justified in my estimate of the situation,

but the tussle was not yet over. The following morning, having performed my ablutions, I joined the circle round the camp-fire as usual, but ostentatiously left it to Ibrahim to give the signal for a start. The first lap of the day's march was but a short one, for the *Ghadir*, at which we had to draw water, was scarcely three miles distant. Our course up to that point lay over the bare undulating plain, converging gradually on the acacia-marked line of Sha'ib Halfawi a mile distant to our left at starting, and parallel to the line of the Daghama and Mishash ridges about three miles to east of us, while away to the west lay the broad expanse of the Tuwaiq uplands, in which a pair of upstanding cones were pointed out to me as the point at which Sha'ib Birk issues therefrom on to the plain. This *Sha'ib* itself we crossed within half a mile of its junction with the Halfawi shortly before reaching the *Ghadir* in the bed of the latter half a mile above the confluence.

The *Hamla* was already at the two large pools of ponded flood-water, which constitute the *Ghadir*, drawing water for the kitchen, and I dismounted to smoke a quiet pipe while my companions filled their water-skins. The course of the stream, near whose source at the foot of the headland of Khashm al Mishash lies a permanent watering-place of the Dawasir, a group of unlined wells or rather water-holes which go by the curious name of Mishash al Niswan, is lined with well-grown acacias on either side for some distance above and below the pools; its bed is composed of great slabs of sandstone rock, here and there covered with patches of pebbles and sand or strewn with boulders, which with the water and the rich vegetation about its borders, produced a very pleasing effect in its dreary setting of bare desert.

Resuming our march we followed the right bank of the Halfawi for about a mile to a point where it bends back sharply towards Khashm al Mishash and is joined on the left bank by a big torrent from the Tuwaiq slopes, Sha'ib Tilha. At this point we crossed the rocky and still well-wooded channel, in which I observed occasional pools of water amid the rocks, and leaving it behind us for good, followed the Tilha, now in its pebbly bed and now to one side, until it is joined by Sha'ib Ba'aija. Thence, with the

latter gradually diverging from us on the right towards Tuwaiq, we struck out over an immense level plain of the smoothest loam for the most part, but with occasional streaks of pebbles, towards the Insalah downs, a tract of barren, broken uplands, which connect the western flank of the Biyadh with the eastern extremities of Tuwaiq and thus constitute the northern boundary and watershed of the vast network of drainage channels belonging to the Sahaba system.

Wearily we padded over the dreary flat unrelieved by any spot of verdure and already burning under the merciless rays of the sun. The light southerly breeze, which was blowing at our start, had died away leaving an oppressive stillness in the air; the growing heat and empty stomachs drew furtive glances from my companions towards the *Hamla*, in which according to our custom lay the mess of cold rice and meat prepared overnight for breakfast; but for a time no word was said of halting—on the contrary there seemed a general desire to increase our rate of travel. True to my decision, however, I followed instead of leading, and my *Dhalul*, readily accommodating her movements to the furtherance of my designs, lagged nobly, sometimes even in the rear of the *Hamla*. Mitrak and Muhammad dropped back in turn to urge me to a better speed only to be lectured on the proper care of *Dhaluls* in a high temperature. Tami, unable longer to support the anguish of hunger within him, rode back loudly protesting he would die if he did not eat, but I only replied that he should take his tale of woe to Ibrahim, in whose hands was now the ordering of our movements in accordance with the unanimous decision of yesterday, and that my decision to interfere no more with his dispositions was final. The Arabs, well enough accustomed to endurance in the actual absence of victuals, drew the line at abstaining from the good things ready to their hand, and public opinion now turned against Ibrahim as the author of their misfortunes. He dropped back to where I rode in the rear protesting I had misunderstood him and assuring me vehemently of his future obedience, but I told him that I had no desire to discuss the matter further with him, having arrived at a final and unalterable decision that he

was henceforth to be in sole command, and as he persisted in arguing the point I urged my *Dhalul* to a trot, leaving him behind loudly clamouring for forgiveness.

By this time we were rapidly approaching the fringe of the Insalah downs, which of old they nicknamed Umm al Rukban from the circumstance that it used to be a favourite resort of robber bands, who, lying up in the folds of the downs, used to pounce upon and ransack caravans passing between Hauta and Kharj and the south country. In those days it was the Dawasir and Shamir and occasionally the Al Murra, who terrorised the country-side by their frequent depredations, but of late there has been peace and security in this dangerous tract thanks to the vigorous measures adopted by Ibn Sa'ud to suppress piracy and to employ the energy once expended on it in more profitable directions. Men such as Mitrak and others of my party, who once existed by their wits at the expense of more peaceable and more prosperous citizens, are now content to draw a regular salary from the State treasury in return for their services as messengers and intelligence agents.

The outermost hills of this tract are called Mudahaiyat towards the east and Barqiyya on the west, between which the plain now thrust a broad wedge. Occasional patches of sand dotted with bushes of *Sharr* and sparsely covered with yet green grass and *Adhir* have earned for the plain at this point the name of *Sha'ib*, the drainage of the downs seeming to pass down it in the direction of the Halfawi. Following the depression we came at length to a band of sand-dunes, beyond which we ascended abruptly by a narrow passage into the downs themselves, striking them at the point where the caravan track from the south emerges from them and bifurcates towards Hauta and Kharj respectively. We still marched on crossing first a petty watercourse called Qurai' al Dhib and then Sha'ib Insalah itself both in a dismal setting of bare stone-strewn mounds, but the latter, a steeply inclined, broad, sandy torrent-bed, sweeping in bold curves through deep-cut banks. As far as I could ascertain, it emerges eventually into the Mudahaiyat *Sha'ib*, though it carries but little water and that seldom. A pool of water near our crossing was indeed evidence of a recent flood, but the

water-holes scratched up in the sand a little higher up were dry, though water is generally to be found here without much difficulty by digging new holes anywhere in the channel. A low ridge separates Sha'ib Insalah from the Khabi valley, towards which we now descended a long, gentle, barren slope. It was but an hour short of noon when we arrived near a patch of acacias at the head of Sha'ib Khabi, which eventually joins the Insalah, and we had marched over five hours without a break since leaving the *Ghadir* of Halfawi. A final appeal was made to me without success, and Ibrahim in desperation gave the signal to halt.

I was now approached by a deputation headed by Ibn Jilham and Tami, who conveyed to me Ibrahim's request for forgiveness and pleaded importunately for his pardon, promising that he would not offend again. The matter had now gone far enough and the unprecedented exertions of the day were sufficient evidence of a spirit of contrition all round, so, contenting myself with demanding that Ibn Jilham and Tami should publicly guarantee his conduct for the future, I announced amid much satisfaction that I would pardon him and overlook his previous behaviour on the understanding that in future there should be no question of a duality of command and no murmuring. Ibrahim, who had been busying himself in the meantime by setting up my tent, now appeared sheepishly enough and enquired whether he had been forgiven. More talk ensued and the re-establishment of amicable relations was signalised by the appearance of the long overdue meal, to which we did ample justice.

CHAPTER IX

AL AFLAJ

1. THE APPROACH

THE actual summit of the watershed lay some three miles south of our midday camp along a low but well-marked cliff, which, running due east and west between the extremities of the Biyadh and Tuwaiq, forms a natural boundary between the tumbled downs of Insalah and the smooth steppe desert of Dhaharat al Rajd sloping down very gently beyond them towards the plain of Al Aflaj. We were now about 2300 feet above the level of the sea, 400 feet above Riyadh, of which we lay due south, and 900 feet above Yamama at the lowest point of the Kharj valley, whence we had ascended almost imperceptibily but without a break. But Sha'ib Khabi was the last of the northward-trending valleys, the last tributary of the 'Ajaimi southward, and henceforth we were to find ourselves descending on a southward course and the watercourses from Tuwaiq inclining in the same direction in their passage across our path towards the Biyadh wilderness. This latter appeared on our left hand, distant and dimly discernible, as a low coast trending southward from the familiar landmark of Khashm al Mishash and, owing to its deceptive appearance of being more elevated than it is in fact, is spoken of as *Al Haqaf* or the cliff, the first hearing of which word prompted enquiries on my part regarding those mysterious and even fabulous tracts of sand shown in most maps of Arabia and mentioned in several geographical works relating to that country under the name of Al Ahqaf or Al Ahkaf.[1] The similarity and

[1] Chapter xlvi. of the *Quran* is entitled Al Ahkaf owing to the mention therein of a district of that name, the kingdom of Ad in south-western

indeed identity of the two names—for the modern Arabs would pronounce both *Hagaf*—suggested to me for a moment that perhaps I was actually in view of the first sand-ridges of the Empty Quarter, but the illusion was soon dispelled by the explanations offered by my companions, who made it clear that they used the word only of the apparent cliff or outer rim of the vast steppe known as Al Biyadh, a firm, flat, pebble-strewn wilderness, similar, though on a vastly greater scale, to the Dhaharat al Rajd itself. Of the sand-tracts of which I spoke they had no knowledge, not even Jabir the *Marri*, who knew Al Ramal, the great sand desert, and various subdivisions of it such as Jafura and Al Khiran, but had never heard mention of Al Ahqaf.

The heat was very great during the first hour of our halt, the thermometer in my tent recording nearly 106° at noon, but thereafter a gusty north wind brought us welcome relief and the temperature dropped rapidly to about 100° by 3 P.M., when we resumed our march. The parched downs, streaked here and there with patches of black gravel, literally swarmed with *Dhab*, a curious species of armoured lizard of ungainly build, but amazingly swift of foot, which, spying us as they lay basking in the sun, scuttled away at full speed to take refuge in the subterranean galleries in which they live. The wiser of them, indeed, seldom seemed to venture more than a few feet from their holes, flying to which on the approach of a possible foe they would peer cautiously round and take to earth at the slightest alarm, but one more bold or less wise than his fellows provided us with a very pretty piece of sport at the expense of his life, for Muhammad, seeing him well out from cover on an open stretch of ground, sprang from his saddle and gave chase as the quarry turned to flee. The *Dhab* having a good start and presumably the advantage of knowing the position of its hole, Muhammad was extended to the utmost to overtake him and even then the game was far from over, for the

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Arabia, which was destroyed by God for its sins after a vain warning by the Prophet Hud (see p. 100 *infra*). Sale (p. 406, *note* y) explains the name as follows: "Al Ahkaf is the plural of *Hekf* and signifies sands which lie in a crooked or winding manner; whence it became the name of a territory in the province of Hadramaut, where the *Adites* dwelt."

little brute, exerting all the cunning of despair, doubled back and zigzagged and circled round his pursuer with truly marvellous agility. He had another advantage, for woe to him who lays hands on these beasts, incautiously exposing himself to their ferocious bite, of which the Arabs entertain a very wholesome dread. But he had lost his sense of direction and in the end after a game struggle fell a victim to the superior manœuvring of Muhammad, who, grasping him securely behind the shoulders, brought him back in triumph for us to see before the knife ended his troubles. This specimen was somewhat more than a foot in length, being classed as *Jidha*, a two-year-old, and reckoned to be in its prime as food for man. The *Dhab*, of which I have seen specimens nearly two feet in length and of proportionate girth, and which is more usually marked down to its hole and then excavated, is considered by the Arabs a delicacy no whit inferior to chicken, but in this opinion they are scarcely justified, for the flesh of the thorny tail, which is reckoned more tasty than that of the rest of the body, has a coarse fishy taste bordering on the unpleasant.

Our bag of this day was completed by a *Jarbu'a* dug up from his hole and a sand-grouse obtained in somewhat curious circumstances. Four of these birds, feeding close by our track as we came upon them, and perhaps too sluggish for any greater exertion, cowered down in the sand thinking thus to escape observation as our camels filed past them; but the other Muhammad, having unslung and loaded his rifle, slipped quietly to the ground and, taking cover behind a low thorn-bush, fired when the field was clear. At the report all four birds rose scarcely more than a yard into the air and settled again on the same spot apparently none the worse for their fright; again Muhammad fired and three birds rose, circled round us and fled, leaving the fourth shattered on the ground. It may be that the first shot had in some way temporarily incapacitated one of the birds for flight and that his companions had descended with him out of sympathy or that all four were too dazed by the heat to realise the danger to which they were exposed until one of them fell dead; but I should mention that the victim had a broken leg in addition to a nasty body-wound.

Throughout the day we saw gazelles in plenty but never near enough to warrant pursuit; while the rebellious youngster, for whose transport we had made elaborate arrangements on one of the *Hamla* camels, disappointed our hopes by succumbing to the heat.

A large cairn crowns the crest of the cliff at the point where our track rose from the Insalah downs on to the Rajd uplands, over whose monotonous steppes, diversified only by occasional lumpy excrescences of basalt [1] or *Hala* as it is called in these southern districts, we marched in a southerly direction. Shortly before camping for the night we crossed a well-marked track lying east and west between the Biyadh pastures on the one hand and the wells of Qalha and Warhiyya, three and six miles distant respectively, on the other. Then, having marched about seven miles during the afternoon we came to the first of the Rajd *Sha'ibs*, a nameless tributary of the Daiya ahead, and decided to halt. Here in a thick thorn bush I found the nest of a *Srad* or *Slad* with four or five semi-fledged young; the mother-bird, which hopped about on the upper branches of the bush less concerned for her own safety than for that of her young while I examined the nest, appeared to be of the shrike family, probably a lesser shrike, black and white in colour; it is known in Northern Najd by the name of *Sabri*.

Next morning, continuing our march, we crossed another track to the Qalha wells before coming to Sha'ib Daiya, the first of the more important drainage arteries of the Rajd system. Formed upstream of this point by the confluence of the Dara'i and Ghulghul *Sha'ibs*, in the latter of which lie the Qalha and Warhiyya wells, it passes across our path in a south-easterly direction to join Sha'ib Shitab, whose grassy bed thickly covered with *Markh* and *Salam* bushes we crossed above their junction two miles farther on. The uplands, hitherto flat, now began to undulate gently, our

[1] Possibly the many black hummocks and ridges of this tract and farther south were not basalt but blackened sandstone; specimens collected by me for submission to the experts have unfortunately only recently arrived from Arabia, where I left them with my heavy luggage, and have not yet been examined.

track descending by a series of easy steps into a jumble of black ridges, through which we threaded our way along the well-wooded sandy bed of Sha'ib Ghina. Here we breakfasted by a mere puddle of flood-water, at which our camels slaked their thirst, before passing on by a conspicuous black, cone-shaped hillock called 'Ubaid Ghina out of the channel on to a rolling gravelly down, whose surface was curiously marked out in a vast check-pattern of black and tan, the former colour tending to predominate as we advanced and eventually monopolising the whole field, as if the country for miles around had been reduced to cinders by some mighty conflagration in ancient times.[1] This wide volcanic field may perhaps be identified with the Harrat al Sauda,[2] of which Doughty was told that it lay in the Tuwaiq region half a day's journey along and across, but it has none of the grandeur of the great *Harra* masses of the western borders and may but mark the extreme limit of an eastward extension of the great upheaval, whose main force expended itself to the southward in throwing up the giants of the Nawasif Harra.[3]

Farther on a network of little *Sha'ibs*, collectively known as Ummhat Shubairim, traversed the blackened waste on their way to join the Ghina, whose rich scrub line diverged gradually from our course. A low black ridge beyond this depression gave us a view of a wide trough below, into which we descended making for a cairn-crowned hillock marking the position of a watering at the farther side. Towards this point two broad torrent strands, descending from the broken flanks of Tuwaiq, made their way through the tumbled landscape, welcome streaks of green amid a desolation of black and brown and grey, to join beneath the cairn and to pass on in a single channel into the Ghina and beyond. Their names, Sha'ib al 'Ars, the more northerly, and Sha'ib al Mira', perpetuate if indeed they did not give rise to a local legend of a rustic wedding proposed, celebrated and consummated by the water-holes of Mishash al 'Ars

[1] *Vide* Miss Bell's description of the Safa east of Jabal Druz in *The Desert and the Sown*, pp. 115 *et seq.*

[2] *Vide* C. M. D., *Arabia Deserta*, vol. ii. p. 542.

[3] *Vide* Vol. I. pp. 165 and 169.

at the junction on the occasion, it would seem, of a chance meeting between hostile sections of the Dawasir, the one coming from the north as we had done down the 'Ars channel and the other descending along the Mira' from the pastures of Tuwaiq. A low ridge separating the two channels concealed the parties each from the other's view until they emerged simultaneously into the open space around the wells, when for some reason not explained peaceful counsels prevailed over natural promptings to war and the precarious truce was without delay transformed into a permanent peace by the marriage of a *Shaikh's* daughter to a *Shaikh's* son. The Mira' channel preserves the memory of the marriage contract as the 'Ars the memory of the marriage feast. The wells, mere unlined shafts scraped out in the sandy torrent-bed to a depth of four to six feet and dotted about over a considerable area, had been drained wellnigh dry by a gathering of Dawasir shepherds and their sheep, which was in occupation on our arrival, but Ibrahim, I know not whether by rough or gentle means, secured recognition of our pressing needs, and, a sheep-trough being borrowed—such troughs consist of a simple wicker stand about two feet high and as much in diameter, over the top of which a skin is laid to receive the water as it is ladled in from the well—we monopolised one of the wells for the short period of our midday halt, the water-supply being replenished as we exhausted it by further scraping of the sandy bottom; the water was necessarily far from clean, but wholesome enough and pleasantly cool.

Resuming our march in the afternoon we skirted along the Wuthaithiyat ridge between the two *Sha'ibs*, and gaining the farther shore of the trough rose sharply on to a bare stony ledge, from whose summit the well-marked track descends abruptly a hundred feet on to a vast plain, encircled by a low rim of misty desert uplands and dotted sparsely with dull dark patches, which they hailed with all the relief of weary men arrived at the goal of their endeavour. "*La ilaha illa 'llah!* look, O *Sahib*! there before us is Wusaila," said Muhammad, as we paused at the threshold of his homeland to view the scene, "and beyond it to the left is Jufra, where are my granges and my corn-

fields, and there is Laila and 'Ammar and Saih—this is the Aflaj, this is my country and yonder, where we shall halt this night, dwells my wife."

2. Modern Aflaj

Subhan allah w'alhamdulillah wa la ilaha illa 'llah w'allahu akbar! such was the burden of the doleful dirge which had sped us during the day over the dreary burnt-out wilderness of Rajd, the *solo* intoned at intervals by the young Muhammad being taken up in refrain by the others without variation and to the exclusion of lighter *motifs*. It was a new song to me and struck me as being in harmony with the monotony of the landscape around us, but the sight of our haven before us at but little distance wrought an instant change in the temper of my companions, who frolicked and gambolled like children, singing, as we advanced, profane melodies of love and war and travel, and anon goading their jaded beasts into a mad scurry after a young gazelle, which we started from its couch in the bushy plain.

Somewhat less than forty miles in diameter, so far as I may judge, the Aflaj plain, which constitutes the lowland district of the province,—for of the settlements reckoned to it among the uplands of Tuwaiq it will be time enough to speak in connection with my passage through them on my return journey—is a vast circular basin gently tilted from west to east and completely enclosed by the eastern fringe of the Tuwaiq plateau on the one side and the low cliff of the Biyadh on the other, except for a slender gap on the northern side of the circumference, which is bridged by the southern cliff of the Rajd plateau. Its soil is a light sandy loam well covered with desert grasses and in places thickly overspread with scrub, except in the south-eastern quarter of the circle, whose surface is overlaid with a covering of friable limestone, bare and barren and slightly raised above the general level of the plain. Diagonally across the basin from north-east to south-west extends a broad band of greater fertility than the rest, within whose limits, sharply enough defined from the desert on either side, though

here and there disfigured by waves of drifted sand, lie alike the relics of a civilisation long forgotten and the more modest evidences of contemporary industry and in which we may trace by obvious indications three distinct stages of local history, ancient, medieval and modern, the "*Adite*" period in the centre, the 'Anaza period in the south and the existing Dawasir occupation with its centre of gravity in the north.

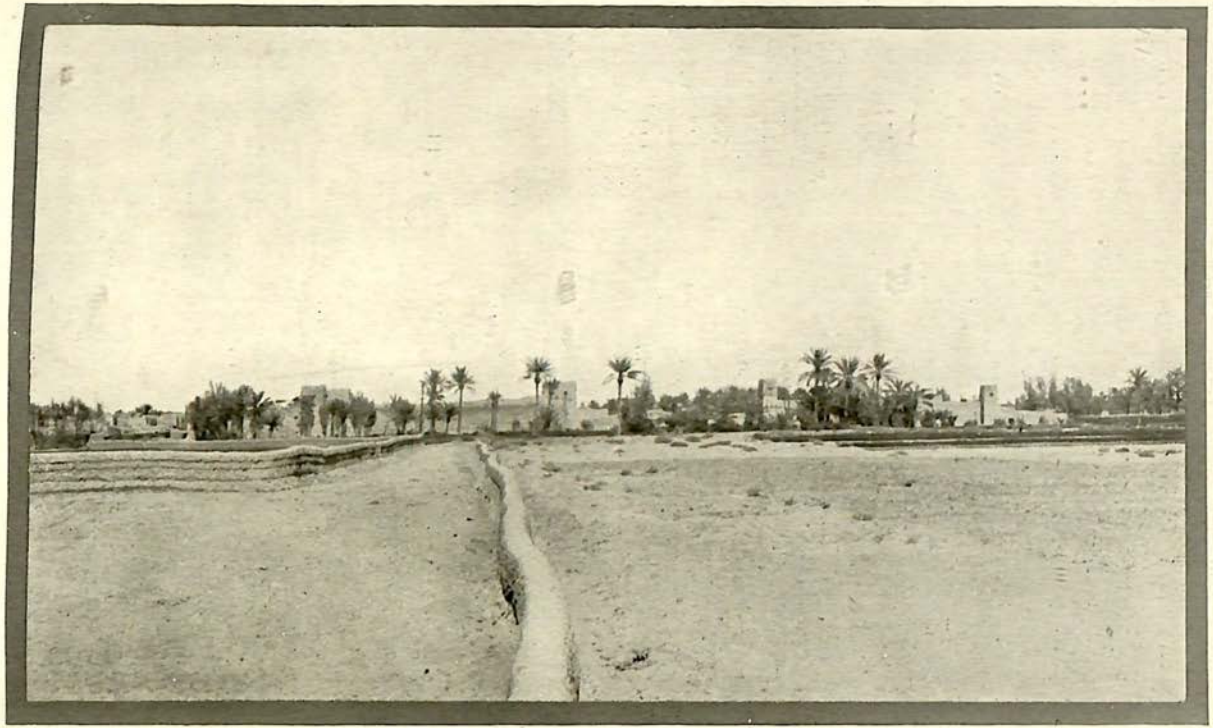
It was towards the northern extremity of the northmost or modern section that we now made our way, descending from the last shelf of Rajd at the angle formed by it with a projecting elbow of Tuwaiq into the plain. Directly before us in the distance lay the oasis of Laila, towards which the highroad led due south across the Hadhafa, a bushy depression running from the flanks of Tuwaiq south-eastward along the edge of the Rajd uplands, whose drainage it carries down in a number of pebbly strands towards the 'Ars. Following the highroad for nearly a mile we struck away south-eastward towards Wusaila at a point a little short of the first outpost of the Aflaj, the ruined grange of Shajariyya, round which, according to local report, there was extensive cultivation half-a-century ago in the days of Faisal, though its wells now lie derelict and have long been dead. The black stony soil of the Hadhafa channel, from which rose here and there a basalt hummock, now gave way to a stretch of soft salt-crusted loam, covered with tufts of *Rimdh* and traversed by the narrow sandy bed of the Umm al Jurf *Sha'ib*, which meandered between banks two feet high towards the Wusaila cornfields.

"See yonder," said Muhammad, "one of the *Qasrs* of Jufra to the eastward; the land around it belongs to me and my three brothers and four cousins. With much ado and at great expense, for it took us long to save the needed money, we brought it last year under cultivation and now we lease it to the *Hadhr* (townsfolk) of Wusaila for a rent of 500 *Sas* of wheat a year. In it are three draw-wells sunk to a depth of ten fathoms, great was the labour thereof; and every year at harvest time we come in from the pastures to receive our rents. And I have taken to me a wife of the *Hadhr*, who lives at Wusaila with her father's

people and it is but rarely I see her, but, *inshallah*, to-night or to-morrow, when I take my leave of you, I shall visit her. From Wusaila we reckon it twelve days to the Hasa across the Biyadh, and we water but once in the journey at Wasi'a before we strike the Dahana. And see yon little hill southward of my lands on the edge of the desert, we call it Muraiqib, and on its summit sit the shepherds watching their grazing flocks."

And so we drew near to our destination. A long line of *Qasrs*, fourteen I counted, of which six were in ruinous state, lay astride the Umm al Jurf along a narrow strip of cultivation, cornfields with occasional patches of lucerne and saffron, with here and there a pomegranate bush, extending a mile or so to the hamlet of Wusaila and its group of five diminutive palm-groves. We drew rein and camped near one of the larger *Qasrs* on the edge of the channel and pitched our tents and made ready for the evening meal. Little notice was taken of our arrival, but churlish protests were raised as Ibrahim went forth to appropriate for our use a little firewood; his reply was a volley of stones and virulent abuse at the leader of the opposition, who recoiled to his own folk and troubled us no more. "But where," I asked, "is Umm al Shinadhir, which is shown on my map as being close by Wusaila?" "I know not," replied Muhammad, "but this is all Wusaila up to the palm-groves yonder, and the other name I have never heard." But there was with us one 'Abdul'aziz, a townsman of Kharj, whom we had found plodding away alone and on foot on the first day out from that district and whom we had assisted on his way by an occasional lift and by allowing him to share our camps and our meals. "Know you not," said he to Muhammad, "that this is indeed Umm al Shinadhir, where we are camped? it is but the name of the well at which you have just drawn water—one of the wells of Wusaila; strange that you, whose home is here, should not know your own village as well as a stranger who has never seen it before, but the English—nothing escapes them, and they know everything and enquire about everything, even to the names of plants and insects as we have seen."

The water of Wusaila is for the most part brackish,



LAILA, THE CAPITAL OF THE AFLAJ.

hamaj as they say, but sweet water is to be found in three wells, namely that of Umm al Shinadhir near our camp and two others near the hamlet at the southern end of the settlement; their depth to water varies from eight to ten fathoms. The palm-groves round the hamlet, which is a mere collection of hovels, about thirty in number and much dilapidated, are wretched in the extreme and intermingled with thickets of *Ithil* and occasional bushes of pomegranate. The village folk are all Dawasir of the Hasan branch, numbering perhaps some 250 souls in all, including the inhabitants of the *Qasrs*. The scene is completed by the presence at no great distance in the plain to eastward of a few detached granges and their surrounding corn-lands, such as Al Nahaqa with its two *Qasrs*, the property of the *Amir* of Laila, Sabah al Khair to the south of it and Qasr Rawwas farther afield to the east.

Early in the morning of May 14 we broke camp to set forth for Laila, the modern capital of the province, some six miles south-west of Wusaila. Two women of the town had come out, as is their wont, to gather grass for their well-cattle on the banks of a little channel, called Waitan, which traverses the bare plain from west to east; at sight of our cavalcade advancing across the plain—for the rumour of my coming had doubtless preceded me—they stood bewildered for a moment and then, depositing their burdens of hay upon the ground, turned and fled in obvious alarm before us. Our cries of reassurance failed to check them and, as it was not desirable that they should arrive at the town before us with alarming tales of terror, Muhammad set his *Dhalul* to a canter and soon came up with them. The women, thus overtaken, fell on their knees beseeching him with piteous cries for mercy, and great was their wondering relief as we passed by ignoring them. "See," said Tami to me, as they rose and returned to their grass bundles, "they have never seen the likes of you before, and their teachers tell them that your people eat up the men and ravish the women wherever they go—they are but ignorant and simple folk."

A considerable amount of harmless curiosity was displayed by the people as we arrived before Mubarraz, a large

but ruinous village standing back in an angle of the oasis at its north-western corner, where we were welcomed on behalf of the *Amir* by a *Dausari* henchman of his suite, named Muhammad, and conducted by him along the western fringe of the palms to a bare sandy space opposite the main or western gate of Laila itself, whose walls and turrets standing back somewhat behind a thin veil of palms made a picture of uncommon charm. At the camping-ground we were met by further emissaries of the *Amir* bringing us plenteous provision for our stay—five goats, two large dishes of the choicest local dates, a great bowl of Yaman coffee-beans, which they designate by the term *Barriyya* because it is imported hither by land, vegetables in plenty and cow's milk and lucerne for the camels. I left Ibrahim to make the customary return presents to the *Amir's* servants and to prepare our camp, while I with Tami and others of the party proceeded without delay to pay my respects to the Governor himself. A narrow lane led from our camp through walled gardens to the western gate, on one side of which the town wall was supported on a row of columns over the bed of a torrent channel, while on the other and protruding boldly from the line of the wall towered the bastioned residence of the *Amir*, the *Qasr al Shuyukh*. Entering the town we turned along a street to the right and after a few paces arrived at the great gate of the castle, which faces inwards towards an oblong *Suq*. Immediately within the entrance in a narrow dingy hall, whose walls were lined on either side with low benches of earth, sat Sa'd ibn Affaisan, Governor of the Aflaj province, to whose charge he had but lately been transferred from the comparative sinecure of the *Amirate* of his own village in Kharj. Known throughout Najd as a strong, unyielding man with a full measure of *Wahhabi* austerity, he seemed to me also to be endowed in a high degree with the gifts of tact and courtliness, to which several qualities are doubtless due both the success, which had already attended his handling of a difficult and quarrelsome tribe, and his own great personal popularity. He appeared to be of about the middle age or somewhat less, in face and build a typical *Najdi*, slight but not tall, with an air of cunning and obstinacy in the

narrow cheek-bones and slightly bearded, pointed chin and a loud strident voice, whose aggressive tones somewhat spoiled an otherwise pleasing manner. The formal greetings over, the *Amir* beckoned me to the seat on his right and the coffee passed round, the first cup being handed to him and taken as a matter of course—correctly I think as regards etiquette, though 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi, who is not only the Governor of a province but a member of the royal family, would have done otherwise—while I was served next. I told him of my experiences in Kharj and of the great reservoirs, which he confessed to not having seen. "But wait," said he, "we have springs here more wonderful than those of Kharj, which you shall see to-morrow; as for Wadi Dawasir, for three generations it had not been known to flow, but last year in *Ramdhan* God made it flow in the old channel, breaking through a sand-barrier two days' journey in breadth and the stream flowed even to Kimida; ask of Mit'ab here, a *Shaikh* of the Wadi, who has even now arrived thence on his way to Riyadh." "If you are not in great haste," I said, turning to the burly, ill-clad chieftain, who sat on the *Amir's* left between him and a notable of the town, I think a member of the 'Ajjalin house, "if you are in no great haste to arrive at Riyadh, would you not accompany me to the Wadi and return with me to Ibn Sa'ud?" The Arab smiled: "*Wush al masliha?*" he replied, which I can only interpret as meaning: "Will you make it worth my while?" Later I asked Ibrahim to pursue the proposal with him, but Mit'ab apparently thought better of his offer and I saw him no more. I remarked appreciatively on the peaceful state of the country between Kharj and the Aflaj. "Yes," said the *Amir*, "formerly there was but little security in these parts, but thanks to God and to the wise policy of Ibn Sa'ud all that is changed and even the wild tribes now raid each other only with the permission of Ibn Sa'ud. Why, only recently the Al Murra attacked an encampment of the Bani Hajir and killed two of them, but Ibn Jiluwi has seven of the aggressors in jail and not long since I permitted a party of Dawasir to go out against Jabrin whence, *inshallah*, they will soon return for it is nearly

two weeks since they started off into the desert, each *Dhalul* carrying two skins of water and a bag of dates. When they approach their goal, they will leave the water-skins in the desert, make their attack and come away, picking up their skins where they left them, for in all that desert is no water and at this season even the camels can scarcely endure the pangs of thirst. We in Laila have ever been staunch supporters of Ibn Sa'ud against the lawless elements, who have from time to time sought to shake his throne. Our regular military contribution to his support is 300 men, but in times of special danger we send more, as, for instance, when some twelve years ago Ibn Rashid, reinforced by several battalions of Turkish [1] troops and some artillery, advanced into the Qasim ; on that occasion 800 men went up from Laila alone to join the forces of Ibn Sa'ud, and a great encounter took place at Hadiyya, where God routed the Turkish battalions and then Ibn Sa'ud routed them and the remnants returned to Baghdad, leaving us in peace."

The third round of the censer presented a suitable opportunity of taking our leave of the *Amir*, whose guests we were to be for several days yet, and whom I should, therefore, have frequent occasion to see again. He had not risen to receive me at my first entry, but rose now to speed me on my way and henceforth whenever we met or parted, admitting, as I afterwards heard through Ibrahim, that his first experience of personal intercourse with an infidel, an experience to which he had submitted as a loyal servant of Ibn Sa'ud, had proved to be less disagreeable than he had anticipated. I went out with my companions into the *Suq*, an oblong space of no great dimensions bordered on one side by the castle wall and on the other three by lines of single-storeyed shops, sixteen on each of the longer sides and eleven on the other; the central space was thronged with buyers and itinerant hawkers displaying their wares in open baskets or on the sandy ground—here a bundle or two of grass from the desert or lucerne, there a basket of fruit or vegetables and a good deal of homespun cloth, dyed a dull blue colour and said to be imported from the

[1] *Vide* G. L. B., *The Desert and the Sown*, pp. 46 and 47. These events took place in the winter of 1906–1907.

Hasa. Laila is the only important market town of the Aflaj, but the transactions of its *Suq* appeared to be conducted on a modest scale. Through the upper end of the *Suq* runs the only important thoroughfare of the town connecting the gates at its north and south extremities, through the latter of which we now passed out into a lane leading through palm-groves to the hamlet of Jufaidariyya at the south-west corner of the oasis. Here we dallied awhile, threading the narrow, tortuous main street from the north gate to that on the south and thence passing round the very irregular western face of the hamlet, in which also is a gate—the east wall gives directly on to a palm-grove and has no gate—we turned back to our tents, where the morning meal awaited our coming. Those of the *Amir's* retinue, who had business in our camp, sat to meat with us, while little groups of townsfolk, mostly children and women, gathered about the camp at a little distance to gaze upon the infidel stranger. So far as I could see the attitude of the people was one of simple curiosity rather than of resentment and hostility, and I was never in any way molested during my wanderings about the town or the oasis, but for this perhaps I should thank the *Amir*, who had publicly threatened—and would not have scrupled to carry out his threat if necessary—to cut off the right hand of any who spoke against me, and an incident which occurred during the afternoon of the day of my arrival made it clear that there were people in the town who felt strongly about my being allowed to come among them. Our camp was wrapped in slumber and I was sitting reading in my tent, when I became aware of angry voices in the next tent and a minute later saw emerging therefrom armed with swords and *Mish'abs*[1] one of our own *'Abid* and another of the *Hamla* followers, who dashed off in the direction of the palm-groves. Scenting trouble, I shouted to the slumbering Ibrahim: "Oh Ibrahim! Ibrahim! what are those two going off there for? what has happened? call them back lest they make mischief for us." The truants slunk back at his call. "What is the matter?" he asked them. "Such an one and I," said the *'Abd*, "went forth to a well in yonder garden to

[1] Camel-sticks.

bathe before the *'Asr* prayer and, as we were washing, the owner of the garden came out upon us with his servants and chased us away, calling us *Kuffar*, and we were unarmed, so we ran back to fetch our swords to show them that they may not with impunity insult the servants of Ibn Sa'ud." I chid them for their too great zeal, and the three days of our stay in this locality passed without any recurrence of such incidents.

In the late afternoon when the temperature, which nearly touched 112° at about 1 P.M., had somewhat moderated I went out with a few of my party to inspect the oasis and its settlements. The former extends about a mile from west to east and half as much from north to south, the palm-groves being generally somewhat ragged though productive of excellent dates, of which the varieties most highly prized are the *Siri* and *Safri*, both large and "cool," and the *Nabt al Saif*, small and extremely sweet, but reckoned as "heating," though I consumed large quantities during my stay without any ill effect; other local varieties of note are *Khadhri*, *Makwizi* and *Miskani*. There is much corn-land in the midst of the oasis and also on its fringes, particularly to east and south, and the usual mixed assortment of lucerne, saffron, cotton-bushes along the borders, pomegranates, figs and vines, but the general appearance of the oasis is one of past prosperity and present decay, the explanation of which must be sought in the stormy history of the province during the last half-century. On the northern flank as also on the east I found the gardens much encroached upon by deep waves of drifted sand, said to be of comparatively recent formation, beneath which lay the abandoned and roofless shells of a number of *Qasrs*, which had once guarded this corner of the oasis against aggression from the neighbouring and rival settlements of Saih.

Up to the seventies of last century the premier settlement of the Laila oasis had been Mubarraz, which in the years succeeding the demise of Faisal was reduced to its present ruinous condition by his successor, 'Abdullah, as a punishment for the part it played on behalf of his brother and rival, Sa'ud, during the civil war. Even so its turbulent citizens ceased not to plague their rivals of Laila, rebuilt

in its present form by ʿAbdullah and promoted to be the capital of the oasis, and they relate that but a few years back a fierce battle, which took place in the open space between the two towns and resulted in a total casualty list of fifteen killed, brought down upon Mubarraz the stern attention of Ibn Saʿud, who established peace by the wholesale banishment from their homes of the chief culprits, namely the Albu Ras subsection of the ʿAjlan section of the Hasan Dawasir. The remnants of the population, comprising the Hajji subsection of the same section, the Rashud section of the Subaiʿ, of whose presence here in the midst of the Dawasir I had no explanation, and a sprinkling of negroes and half-castes, have apparently learned wisdom of the experience of their former principals, and eke out a somewhat wretched existence in the hovels which have survived ʿAbdullah's drastic treatment of the town. Its walls are fallen beyond the possibility of repair, and its roofless houses serve as pens for the great flocks of sheep and goats which I saw the village children driving in at eventide from the pastures. What the present population of the place may be it would be hard to say, but I counted about a hundred children with the flocks; they may be 500 souls all told.

Laila itself or Ghusiba, as it is sometimes called to distinguish it from the oasis in which it stands, is the only town, and, therefore, the political and commercial centre of the province. Profiting by the example and misfortunes of its rival, it has developed rapidly in the last forty years from a mere village into a fine walled town with a population of some 4000 souls, of whom the chief element is the ʿAjjalin subsection of the ʿAjlan section of Al Hasan, the bitterest opponents of, though nearly related to, the Albu Ras, and the leaders of the oasis folk on the rare occasions of joint action against the common enemy, the people of Saih. Champions of the oasis against outside aggression, champions of the town against its suburban neighbours, the three great houses of the ʿAjjalin were no sooner rid by joint action among themselves or with their temporary allies of danger from outside than they sprang at each other's throats struggling for supremacy in their own domains out of the

mere love of strife so characteristic of the Dawasir stock. But in these latter times they have reckoned without one stronger than themselves, for Ibn Sa'ud, having cowed the unruly tribesmen into subjection, and realising the violence of the antipathies which had rendered peace within the fold impossible theretofore, proceeded to remove all source of future dissension by placing all sections of the population in equal subordination to an alien governor responsible directly to himself. The last occasion on which Laila figured prominently—and that for but a small fault on its own part—in the political history of Wahhabiland was in 1912 during the insurrection against Ibn Sa'ud headed by his cousin, Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul'aziz ibn Sa'ud, grandson of Sa'ud the son of Faisal. The pretender's banner was raised in the town of Hariq, where an influential section of the populace declared for the elder branch of the royal family against the ruling cadet, but Ibn Sa'ud was down upon the insurgents before they were fully ready. Hariq was sacked and burned as a punishment for its treason and a warning to others, and Hauta wisely refused admission to the fugitive pretender and his troops, who fled southward to the Aflaj and were granted asylum at Laila. But on the appearance of Ibn Sa'ud all thought of resistance was abandoned, and those who had not escaped with Sa'ud himself to the safer refuge of the Hijaz, were handed over at discretion by the townsfolk and led out in pairs, nineteen persons in all, of whom many were principal men of Hariq, to suffer public execution on a scaffold erected before the main gate, whence Ibn Sa'ud, sitting in state, superintended the carrying out of his stern sentence. A thrill of horror convulsed the assembled Arabs and the voice of sedition has been heard no more in Najd.

The town of Laila occupies a central position on the western flank of the oasis astride a branch of the Batin al Hamar torrent, whose main channel, rising near Hamar in the Tuwaiq uplands, passes to the south of the oasis through Kharfa and 'Ammar to Saih. The Laila branch passes into the town under the wall near the main gate and out again near the north gate into a depression on that side. To the right of the main gate rises the imposing

mass of the *Qasr al Shuyukh* or official residence of the *Amir* with lofty turrets at each corner, while at the south-west corner of the town stands a no less imposing fortress, the residence of Ma'jab ibn Turki, the head of the 'Ajjalin, whose peers of the same subsection, Hazzam ibn Khazzam and Thallab ibn Fallaj, occupy houses of less magnificent proportions in the body of the town. Of the *Suq* I have already said enough; the main mosque I did not see. The north-western portion of the town on the left bank of the torrent is occupied by the poorer folk, while the considerable element of negro freemen appear to be wholly relegated to a detached block of buildings and the little hamlets of Marair and Huzaimi all situated beyond the walls on the north side of the town towards Mubarraz. The hamlets of Jufaidariyya and Rumahi, the latter a ragged and much dilapidated group of huts around an elegant mosque in the heart of the oasis, complete the catalogue of the settlements of this tract, whose population all told may amount to some 6000 souls.

South-eastward of the Laila oasis at a distance of three miles lie the palm-groves of Saih, which, though still the most flourishing oasis of the province, more properly belongs in virtue both of its geographical situation and of its history and agricultural peculiarities to ancient rather than modern Aflaj. About two miles from our camp to the S.S.W. lay the little hamlet and oasis of 'Ammar, which I visited on the second day of our stay at Laila; and three miles south-west of the same point lay a group of three contiguous oases—Kharfa, Raudha and Sughu—through which we passed when we resumed our journey southward on the third day.

The oasis of 'Ammar, bounded on the east side by lofty billows of sand, which appear to have encroached upon and obliterated a considerable part of the original plantation, now comprises only a narrow strip of palms, a quarter of a mile long and barely half as much across, in the midst of which stands a small but compact hamlet, girt about with lofty turreted walls, in height and massiveness out of all proportion to the modern status of the settlement. The walled space has a frontage of 100 paces to north and south

and 200 paces to east and west; in the centre astride a street, which leads from the dilapidated southern gate to a gap in the wall, which serves as a gate on the northern side, stands the *Amir's* palace, a two-storeyed building with thick mud walls and a massive tower, in front of which on the opposite side of the exiguous village square is the public mosque. The palm-groves are thin and ragged, enveloping the hamlet on all sides except the south, where are some corn-lands, and here and there a sprinkling of subsidiary cultivation, a little cotton, a few peach-trees and pomegranates and a shrub or two of lemons and pummelows, which they call *Turanj*. The name of the oasis betrays the identity of its people, who belong to the 'Ammar or premier subsection of the 'Ammariyya section of Al Hasan, once a powerful community though time and misfortune have reduced their numbers in their original settlement to not more than 500 souls.

Kharfa is an extensive but utterly unprosperous settlement of decadent palm-groves, untended corn-lands and straggling coppices of *Ithil* and acacia, studded at frequent intervals with the broken shells of long-abandoned granges and hovel groups, with indeed nothing to break the barren monotony of its desolation but a shapeless village of dilapidated mud habitations in its midst, and two handsome *Qasrs* of comparatively recent construction. One of these is the residence of Muhammad ibn Shakbut, the head of the settled elements of the Ghiyaithat, an independent section of the Dawasir, long resident in this locality, while the other, known as Qasr el Dhikan, belongs apparently to some other member of the same section, being possibly the " town house " of Muhammad ibn 'Uqaiyan, the leader of the *Badawin* portion of the Ghiyaithat, whose pastures are in the uplands of Tuwaiq about the settlement of Hamar. At a generous estimate we might place the population of Kharfa at 1000 souls all told, but I should be inclined to place it at a lower figure unless we may assume a condition of serious overcrowding within the narrow limits of the village, whose outside measurements I roughly estimated at seventy yards by fifty. The Batin al Hamar flushes the northern section of the settlement annually at flood-time

and wells, varying in depth from five to eight fathoms according to situation and season, provide the people with a regular supply of water for themselves and their crops. A line of ruined *Qasrs* interspersed with patches of *Ithil* divides Kharfa from the adjoining oasis of Ṛaudha to the southward, a settlement of the Mubarak subsection of the ʿAmmariyya, near cousins of the people of ʿAmmar. The population of this settlement, numbering perhaps 500 souls, is distributed among three little hamlets set close together—Raqaisiyya on the north, Raudha itself in the middle, the largest of the three, and another, whose name I did not discover, on the south. The scattered palm-groves and corn-lands about these hamlets differed little from those of Kharfa except in being slightly less miserable and spreading over a smaller area, but the central hamlet itself stood out in comparison with its surroundings as a little gem of architecture, the corner turrets of the surrounding wall and the minaret of the mosque within forming a lovely group of tapering pinnacles towering high above the humble hovels below. Immediately south of Raudha and near enough to be reckoned part of it lies the diminutive oasis of Sughu, comprising a small walled hamlet, a few stray *Qasrs* and a small area of palm-groves with patches of corn-land about them, supporting a population which cannot exceed 300 souls. Beyond it the southward track leads out across a sandy desert towards Badiʿa, dimly visible in the distance.

Wusaila, Laila, ʿAmmar, Kharfa, Raudha, and Sughu —these are the habitations of modern Aflaj, whose backbone is the Batin al Hamar. Everywhere the prevailing note is one of decay. A decadent, quarrelsome race ekes out a comfortless existence amid the wreckage of homes once prosperous, and fields and groves once fruitful, impiously attributing to God the misery of their own seeking. Peace has at length, it is true, descended upon the land, but only as the handmaid of a narrow creed, and there has yet appeared no sign of the industry which alone can rebuild the vitality which war has sapped. "What think you," said the *Amir* to me, as we sat together on the evening of my second day on the roof of his apartments in the *Qasr al*

Shuyukh, "what think you of this land? has it not been rich in former times, and may it not become so again, if God wishes?" "It is rich indeed," I replied, "in possibilities, but, as in Kharj, the people make no attempt to use the means ready to their hand. I have seen desert countries brought under cultivation by irrigation and I cannot think that, with the water at your command, we should leave your deserts uncultivated, when with proper machinery and great pumps we could flood them from your great reservoirs. Perhaps," I continued, "I may be the means of providing such a pump for your use." "If it were God's will, this land would be all under cultivation; *wallah*, we ask for nothing but of God, and, after him, of Ibn Sa'ud." Feeling that I had unwittingly offended my host, I hastened to assure him that I had discussed such matters with Ibn Sa'ud and that, as a matter of course, it would only be at his desire that the British Government would provide him with agricultural machinery. "But what is it," he persisted, "that has brought you here? Surely your friendship with Ibn Sa'ud is inspired by *Ghish* (ulterior motives), else why should you come to him and why are you travelling about our country? and they say you enquire about everything and write it all down." I assured him that, so far from coveting the barren wastes of Najd, we desired but to divest ourselves of the burden of other and more profitable provinces of the Arab world, 'Iraq and Palestine, which sheer necessity compelled us to hold and administer until other arrangements could be made; and that we sought the friendship of Ibn Sa'ud, and the Arabs generally, as a means to the establishment and maintenance of peace and security on our frontiers. "*Allahu a'lam*," he replied with little conviction, "and Ibn Sa'ud knows best that which will advance the cause of God and the interests of the *Muslimin*—God grant them victory over the infidels. In 'Aridh we are all *Mudaiyinin* and *Ikhwan*, but in these parts and in the Wadi there are as yet but few who have entered the fold; they are wild and ignorant folk, but Ibn Sa'ud knows how to deal with them and they will soon be as the rest of us, please God." This view of his flock somewhat surprised me, as Ibn Sa'ud in con-

versation had always spoken of the people of the Wadi particularly as being among the staunchest adherents of the cause; but the explanation of the different standards of master and steward is simple enough, the latter regarding the formal profession of the new faith as an end in itself, still far from realisation by the undisciplined tribesmen of the south, while Ibn Sa'ud regarding it but as a means to the achievement of an end political rather than spiritual, counted the fanaticism of the Dawasir an instrument not less subservient to his policy than the stolid puritanism of his townsfolk and the organised zeal of the *Ikhwan* communities.

At 5 A.M. on May 17, while our camp equipage was being loaded up for the onward march, Tami and I with a few others repaired to the town to take our leave of the *Amir*, to whom I had sent some trifling presents overnight. The hall of the castle was deserted at that chill hour, and I found Sa'd ibn Affaisan forgathered with a goodly assembly of visitors in a large but dingy apartment on the ground floor. The Jabrin expedition of which he had spoken had just returned unsuccessful, and its leader, Sahmi ibn Sahmi, chief of the Huwamila section of Al Hasan, a tall, lithe man, whose soft, almost feminine voice accorded strangely with his rough exterior and boorish manners, was relating his experiences, sprawling the while at full length on the floor by the hearth. "*Allah yusallimak, ya'l Amir*," he continued after Sa'd had greeted me and explained the matter under discussion, "we rode night and day for seven days and came nigh unto Jabrin before the dawn and we couched our beasts and sent forth men to spy out the land while we prayed the dawn prayer and rested. Then our spies returned reporting that they had seen pickets of the Al Murra on the ridge watching. What was then the use of waiting? We were too few to attack them except by surprise and we feared they might learn of our presence and come out against us; so we mounted again and rode back and here we are, God preserve thee! and, *wallah*, our beasts are famished and thirsting." "God give thee strength, oh Sahmi!" said the *Amir*, "*wallah ya Sahib!* this Sahmi, never before has he returned from a raid, but his beasts were laden with spoils."

3. Ancient Aflaj

That the province of Aflaj enjoyed in the comparatively remote past a degree of prosperity incomparably greater than anything it has experienced in recent times is abundantly vouched for by local tradition, and established beyond the possibility of doubt by extensive remains of a civilisation of a type unknown to modern Arabia, scattered over a tract nearly twenty miles long from north to south along the eastern fringe of the habitable section of the province on and about the western slope of a rough limestone platform of low elevation, which extends under the name of Al Ghadhara eastward as far as the containing rim of the Biyadh wilderness. The hub of this old civilisation was without doubt the remarkable chain of deep spring-fed reservoirs, which exist to this day, still proclaiming to deaf ears the agricultural possibilities of a region long abandoned to desolation, on the crest of the platform somewhat north of the central point of the tract, while there appear to have been two—perhaps more than two—centres of population in those happier times, one towards the northern extremity of the tract in the neighbourhood of the modern oasis of Saih, and the other towards the south near the miserable palm-patches of Ghauta. The whole tract lies south of the Batin al Hamar channel, whose eastern extremity passes through the groves of Saih, and east of a line drawn nearly due south from Laila and passing to the east of Badi'a, and was probably never of any great breadth, though we may suppose that the oases of the Badi'a area and of what I have designated Modern Aflaj were not left uncultivated when the rest of the province was at the height of its prosperity. A belt of sand-dunes, deeper and wider in its northern section along the banks of the Batin Al Hamar, and gradually thinning out to a narrow strip of surface sand towards Badi'a, marks the western boundary of Ancient Aflaj as well perhaps as the western limit of former cultivation dependent on the reservoirs.

The time at my disposal during the two excursions I made for the purpose of examining this remarkable region did not of course permit of anything like an accurate survey

of the country or of the levels, which must have determined the design of the vast and intricate irrigation scheme, of which I found the marks on every side. But the course of the torrent channels, which traverse the Aflaj plain, the position of the reservoirs themselves and the arrangement of the irrigation channels left me with the general impression that, while the plain slopes uniformly from west to east, its slope is interrupted by the raised Ghadhara platform, which projects westward from the edge of the Biyadh with a semicircular sweep, and slopes downward in the same direction with subsidiary slopes to north and south gradually merging as they recede eastward with the general slope of the plain, and that the reservoirs situated on a shelf near the summit of the slope have been tapped by a series of irrigation ducts radiating outwards and downwards to north, west and south. Whether this was indeed the actual scheme of the old irrigation system I cannot pretend to have determined with any degree of certainty, but such parts of the system, which have survived to this day in working order, seem to bear out the view here given. These comprise firstly, a series of canals emanating from the northern reservoirs and flowing northward to irrigate the palms of Saih, and secondly, a subterranean channel, whose head I was not able to discover though its visible course at the point where I saw it was southward in the direction of Ghauta, while a third group of canals, now no longer in use, ran in a westerly or north-westerly direction from the neighbourhood of the reservoirs towards the ruins of an old village called Makhadha in the bed of the Batin al Hamar.

The *'Uyun* or reservoirs of Aflaj are a repetition on a larger and more striking scale of those of Kharj which I have already described. Like them they are reputed to be bottomless, like them they are fed by secret subterranean springs, some of which have ceased to function, like them they have been provided by human agency with outlets into a maze of subterranean aqueducts of the *Kariz* type, which at one time carried, and to a certain extent still carry, off their waters into the surrounding cornfields and palm-groves. Dark and clear and still as it lies in the pits themselves, the water runs off in shallow, rippling

streams of the same metallic transparency as in Kharj. But the points of difference between the two groups are as striking as the points of resemblance. Here there are no less than seven pits—or eight, if the now waterless and earth-filled cavity of what must have been a reservoir like the rest may be counted; the three pits of Kharj were of more or less uniform size averaging about 6000 or 7000 square yards in superficial area, those of Aflaj range from a diminutive shaft about ten yards long and three yards across at the surface through an ascending scale to a regular lake about three-quarters of a mile in length and a quarter-mile across at its broadest part; the water-level in these reaches nearer to the brim of the pits than in the Kharj reservoirs—except 'Ain Mukhisa—and the steep walls of 'Ain al Dhila' and 'Ain Samha are represented by feeble imitations only in the case of two of the Aflaj pits; and finally, while the arrangement of the pits in Kharj appears to be haphazard and suggests no connection between the three, those of Aflaj lie so close together and are so arranged at intervals along the circumference of an arc as to form a connected chain, if not to suggest that the whole group originally constituted a single basin—as they may well still do below the surface—and thereafter became separated into distinct units. The complete covering over of what appears to have been the cavity of one of these pits—a pit of no mean dimensions—and the diminutive size of another perhaps suggest that some process of this kind has been or is still at work; but I must not trespass on provinces beyond my ken; it is sufficient to record the facts.

The arc, on which the pits are situated, lies roughly north and south with its horns pointing westward on a shelf of the platform backed by a low irregular cliff, whose steepest and longest section aligns its southern extremity and flanks the lake, of which I have made mention, the most southerly of the reservoirs, which derives its name of Umm al Jabal—the mother of the mountain—from the fact that the cliff descends abruptly some twenty or twenty-five feet to the head of the gently sloping pebbly beach, which runs down to its eastern edge. This lake is without

THE GREAT LAKE OF UMM AL JIBAL IN THE AFLAJ.

question the most remarkable natural feature of the Aflaj province—perhaps, indeed, of all Inner Arabia, where no other permanent sheet of water of such dimensions is known to exist. In bygone times various European visitors to the southern provinces of the peninsula had, on the authority of information supplied by natives, reported the existence somewhere in the interior of Arabia of a great lake, which they called Bahr Salume, and the cartographers, who used their reports, boldly inserted in their maps a lake of prodigious dimensions with a vague suggestion that it owed its existence to the outpouring of the waters of Wadi Dawasir into its vast basin. Stricter scientific standards, coupled with the remarkable silence of such eminent explorers as Burton, Doughty, Burkhardt, and others well qualified to elicit and sift native information, resulted in the removal of a feature, now believed to be mythical, from all reputable maps; but the older map-makers were nearer the true facts than their successors, though Palgrave, who claimed to have visited the Aflaj in the course of his travels, and might have saved the cartographers of his own and succeeding generations from an error, for which he was doubtless largely responsible, passed by on the other side and left to me the honour of restoring the lake of the old geographers to the map of Arabia—albeit a lake of more modest dimensions than that which they had depicted, and differing from it in other respects. It is indeed astonishing that the existence of such a lake and of the reservoir-groups of Kharj and Aflaj should so long have defied the inquisition of so many indefatigable explorers, who, from afar off and on the strength of native information alone, have placed the oasis-groups of the Aflaj itself and Wadi Dawasir—to say nothing of others—so near their true positions on the map, and I must confess that I was ignorant of their existence until I found myself on the brink of the Kharj pits. But the reason for this apparent anomaly is not, I think, far to seek: in the first place the Arabs invariably designate these pit-reservoirs as *'Uyun* or springs, and make no attempt to distinguish between them and the ordinary springs of other tracts; and in the second place it is remarkable how few Arabs outside the area actually

fed by these sources have ever taken the trouble to visit them—this is particularly the case with the Aflaj pits, those of Kharj being better known.

The Umm al Jabal lake is shaped somewhat like a kite with tapering tail and marked wings projecting on either side at the southern end; it lies in the bottom of a fairly extensive shallow depression, much of whose area round the borders of the water is covered with rank grasses, sedges, and reeds, in the midst of which I saw a number of the stunted cattle of these parts grazing. At its northern end, but well above the present water-level, I noticed the depression of an eastward-trending channel, which may have been a canal or aqueduct in the days when the water reached a higher level, and, if so, must have been abandoned when it receded on the failure of the spring—the lake being now classed as "dead" or still, and therefore useless for irrigation purposes, unless, and until, mechanical means be adopted for feeding the canals dependent on it.

The high ground at the northern extremity of the lake commands an extensive view of the surrounding country. Far away to the east lies the rim of the desolate Biyadh, whose nearest point in this direction is said to be two days' journey distant or perhaps fifty miles, the intervening space being occupied by the broken limestone wilderness of Ghadhara, whose unexplored recesses may contain—though this is by no means probable—lakes and pits similar to those at its western edge; to westward lies the Kharfa group of oases with Badi'a south of them, the distance beyond them being closed in by the dull ridge of the uplands of Tuwaiq; northward lay Laila and Saih and southward Marwan and its neighbouring oases.

Next, to northward from the lake, lay the two smallest of the Aflaj pits in close juxtaposition in the midst of a grassy space; known collectively by the name of Umm al Habbab, both are "dead" for the springs that fed them have ceased to function and I sought in vain for signs of former irrigation dependent on them; one of these is the diminutive pit to which I have already referred, while the other is oval in shape and some sixty yards long with an extreme breadth of forty yards.

Next in order comes a circular reservoir called Umm al 'Adhman with a diameter of about 100 yards, from whose northern end a subterranean aqueduct flows out to play an active part in what survives to this day of the old irrigation system. The walls of the reservoir rise some six feet above the water-level all round, and the head of the aqueduct, whose roof, punctuated at intervals by *Kariz* shafts, was alone visible, lies at a considerable depth—four fathoms they told me—below the water-level. The spring, on which the reservoir depends, must be very much alive to keep the water so high above the outlet which drains it off, but imperfections long neglected in the level of the *Kariz* bed doubtless contribute to this result by reducing the velocity of the stream.

North of this reservoir and somewhere near the central point of the circumference of the arc lies an extensive grassy hollow, now completely dry, though its name, Umm al Dhiyaba, and the presence of an abandoned open aqueduct trending eastward from its southern extremity—not unlike that which I have described in connection with the great lake—suggest that at one time it was a reservoir like the rest. Local tradition supports this view, for the abandoned aqueduct was, they say, excavated by the Al Murra to provide their camp, four days' journey distant towards the Great Sand Desert, with water in the days when their still smouldering feud with the Dawasir was being prosecuted with greater vigour than is now possible under the watchful eye of Ibn Sa'ud. If this tradition rests on any solid basis the reservoir must have been "alive" in comparatively recent times, and at any rate as late as the incursion of the Dawasir into the province, but the tradition may well enough have been invented to explain the aqueduct, which is in itself sufficient evidence for the assumption that the depression must have contained living water at some period in the past.

It would without doubt have well repaid the trouble, if I had followed the course of the channel out over the desert to its distant tail, where possibly I might have discovered some abandoned settlement of the past; but the time at my disposal precluded any such idea—to say nothing of the unwillingness of my companions to endure the discomfort

that such an expedition would have involved. The day on which we made this excursion to the reservoirs, turned out to be one of the hottest of our sojourn in the Aflaj ; it was the middle of May in latitude 22° N. and the sun blazed down vertically upon our heads ; but for all the manœuvres of my guides to curtail our wanderings amid the decayed relics of a once great realm, I managed to keep them out in the open till within an hour of noon—hungry and thirsting, for we had left our camp soon after dawn. Our guides were two men provided by the *Amir*—Muhammad, a dark, surly man of the Dawasir, and Sa'd, a *Qahtani*, a short, cheerful fellow, who, seeing that I was determined to remain out as long as I could, entered into the spirit of the enterprise, and informed me by winks and signs whenever his companion was lying. The rest of my party comprised Ibrahim, Rushaid, Mitrak, and three or four others, who made no attempt to conceal the fact that they were bored with the proceedings and anxious for breakfast. "Now you have seen the springs," said Muhammad after we had seen the first three, those at the northern end of the arc, "let us get on." He looked too hungry to be telling the truth, and a little cross-questioning and bluff elicited the fact that there were some more springs, but a long way distant ; a wink from Sa'd convinced me that he was lying again. "Look," I said, "the *Amir* told me there were many springs here and I have only seen three ; *wallah*, I will not break my fast until I have seen all ; if you know where they are, take me to them ; otherwise I shall seek until I find them." That was enough for Muhammad and the remaining pits, including the lake, were near at hand.

As a matter of fact the *Amir* and others always declared that the Aflaj and Wadi Dawasir enjoy a better summer climate than the tracts farther north : "*Kull ma tajnib, tabrid*" ("The more you go south the cooler you get"); and, whatever may be the reason for so curious a phenomenon, I must admit that my experience during this journey bore out the correctness of their assertion. Another fact which they adduced in explanation of the unusually low temperatures of this particular year, was that the winter rains had been exceptionally heavy—the Batin al Hamar had *sail*-ed seven

times during the season just past—and had cooled the surfaces over which the winds blew. It certainly is a fact that wind during these days was always accompanied by a fall in the temperature, the south wind being somewhat less effective in this direction than the northerly breezes which were always fresh and at times quite cold.

Beyond the Umm al Dhiyaba hollow to the northward within a grassy tract about half a mile in length lay the remaining three reservoirs; the most southerly and smallest of them is a roughly circular pond about fifty yards in length and somewhat less across with a low but abrupt encircling wall rising to a height of two feet above the water-level on all sides except the south, where a face of the ridge already noticed forms a steep cliff about twelve feet high descending sharply to the water's edge. This reservoir, in whose banks I noticed no openings for the outflow of the water, is known as Umm al Jurf on account of the cliff feature here referred to; it is, I believe, counted among the "dead" pits.

The other two are fairly considerable sheets of "living" water, both of which appear to be known by the single name of Al Bahra. The more southerly of the two forms an irregular semicircular figure about 500 yards long and 60 broad, while the other is somewhat smaller, about 300 yards long, 50 across and roughly oval in shape. The banks of both, standing barely a foot above the water-level, are luxuriantly clothed with reeds and grasses, while each has a narrow opening in its northern side, by which its waters pass out into *Kariz* channels, whose shafts are seen protruding above the sand of a thick band of *Nafud*, which projects from the sand tract already noted to within a few feet of the edge of these reservoirs. The depth of the shafts is nearly forty feet at the southern end of the channel, over which the sand is piled up in a high bank, and decreases progressively as one follows it across the sandbank, perhaps a mile across, until the channel emerges from the sands at ground-level, the shafts now disappearing, and continues open for the rest of its course to Saih. This channel, 'Ain Samhan as it is called, is regarded as the main branch [1]

[1] *Umm al Sawaji*, the mother of canals.

of the still-functioning system; those which emanate from the southern Bahra and Umm al 'Adhman find their way under the sand-barrier and join the Samhan at various points along its course. The open streams into which they develop after passing out of the sands, apparently four in number, are distinguished by names reminiscent of the running streams of the Hasa—Majsur, Wajjaj, Barabar, and Manjur, in that order from south to north. Beyond the junction with it of the last named the Samhan approaches the Batin al Hamar channel and thereafter runs parallel with it until they both pass into the cultivated area of Saih.

The oasis of Saih is the sole survivor of the settlements once dependent on the northward irrigation system, the only substantial survivor of all the settlements of Ancient Aflaj, and at the same time the largest and most flourishing oasis of the whole province. It owes an existence, which must have been continuous from past to present times, and its present dominating position as an agricultural centre to the lucky circumstance that it is not, and never has been, solely dependent on either of the factors which have controlled the fortunes of the province from the beginning. Its favourable situation astride the flood-channel of Batin al Hamar and the perennial stream of Samhan has enabled it to dispense with the one or the other without serious detriment to itself as occasion demanded. It could rely on artificial irrigation from the reservoirs to tide it over a long period of drought and deficient rainfall in the uplands at the source of the torrent, just as it could rely on the torrent to flush its groves whenever an enemy occupied the reservoirs and broke down or diverted the streams. Its good luck has evidently spared it such a combination of the two adverse forces as might have laid it low. But, more than this, Saih is fortunate above its neighbours in the constituent elements of its population, for here alone the Dawasir have proved unable to establish themselves to the exclusion of their predecessors—a *Sharifal* clan from the Yaman with its following of sturdy, industrious slaves or negro freemen, who now occupy about half of the oasis and know well how to check the aggression, military or economic, of their greedy, quarrelsome neighbours.

We had sent a message overnight from Laila to the head of this *Ashraf* family apprising him of our desire to breakfast with him, and Muhammad, the surly guide, was all for our making direct tracks for the hamlet at the extreme southern end of the oasis, when our inspection of the reservoir region at last came to an end; but his deceitful tactics had filled me with an obstinate desire to thwart his every suggestion. We accordingly left the Samhan channel to follow the broad sandy bed of the Batin al Hamar towards the northern end of the palm-groves. The torrent-bed bifurcates just before the oasis is reached, one branch running to the right into a dense mass of palms, while the other continuing in a north-easterly direction skirts round the northern extremity of the oasis between it and an outlying, walled palm-grove called Al Tuwairif, in which stands a large well-built *Qasr*. It was this branch that we followed until, finding ourselves on the farther side of the oasis, we skirted along it southward to the *Ashraf* hamlet, having thus made almost a complete circuit of the settlement by the time we reached our goal. On the return journey to Laila we marched through the heart of the oasis, of which I was able to carry away with me a good general impression.

Situated about four miles to the south-east of Laila and three miles to the northward of the reservoir region, the oasis of Saih comprises a strip of dense palm-groves about a mile and a half long from north to south with an average width of perhaps half a mile. Its northern portion is irrigated by the Batin al Hamar floods, which are regulated at the point of the bifurcation of the channel by a rough dam of earth and brushwood placed, as occasion demands, across the mouth of either branch to divert the flow into the other, that which we followed serving generally as an escape at times of heavy flood, while the other and the numerous distributaries which it throws off within the oasis, serve for irrigation purposes. The exceptional floods of this year had, however, caught the cultivators napping, and passing with too great volume and violence into the palm-groves, had left their mark in the settlement in the shape of broken partition-walls, uprooted fences and gateways and

the like. The southern and denser section of the oasis is irrigated by the Samhan stream and comprises a solid belt of magnificent well-tended palms.

A central road, known as Suq al Hish, roughly bisects the oasis lengthways and appears to form the boundary between the two communities, who share the proprietary rights in the settlement in approximately equal proportions —the Dawasir element lying to the east of the road and the *Ashraf* and negro owners to the west. The *Ashraf* families, about thirty in all, are congregated with their slaves and negro tenants in the hamlet of Saih, or Saih al Aqsa as it is more often called, at the southern extremity of the oasis, while the negro owners, mainly of the Qasim section, inhabit the hamlets of Lizidi and Fuwaidhiliyya at its north-western corner and scattered huts among the groves. The Dawasir owners are for the most part absentee *Badawin* of the 'Ammar, Tamim, and Qainan groups, who cultivate through negro tenants, though a few families of Al Hamid, who have formally enrolled themselves among the *Ikhwan*, have settled permanently in the petty hamlet of Qusur Khalaf between Saih and Qutain, also called Saih al Dunya, a hamlet situated in an angle of the palm belt on the east face of the oasis. Qutain is the headquarters of the 'Ammar and other *Badawin* proprietors, who also form the population —besides their negro tenants—of the hamlets of Atmara, Rifa', and Qasr Manna' on the north-east edge of the cultivated area. The bulk of the settled population of the oasis consists of negro freemen, perhaps some 3000 souls in all, who have been settled in this locality for many generations, and, to judge by their general appearance, must have interbred with their Arab neighbours to a considerable extent, though actual intermarriage between negroes or obvious half-castes, whether men or women, and the Arabs does not appear to be a common occurrence, and is looked upon with disfavour. The *Ashraf* families may muster some 200 to 300 souls all told, while 800 souls would be a generous estimate of the settled Dawasir, of whom perhaps some 2000 more are dependent on the oasis for the dates and grain, which they come in from their pastures to claim at the appropriate seasons. The total population of the oasis

would thus seem to be about 6000 souls, of whom only 4000 are permanently settled.

The mainstay of the oasis is, of course, the date crop; its dates are renowned for their excellence, the varieties grown here being more numerous than elsewhere in the province, though the more important kinds are those already noted in connection with Laila.[1] Besides dates, there are much corn, lucerne, saffron and vegetables of various kinds; cotton is grown sporadically though homespun cloth is worn only by the poorest people; vines, pomegranates and other fruit-trees grow well under the shade of the palm-trees. Of recent years there has been a tendency to excavate wells for irrigation purposes to supplement the water-supply derived from the sources already mentioned, with the result that the cultivated area is gradually being increased, thanks to the enterprise of certain commercial interlopers from Laila, who, feeling secure in the peace, which the rule of Ibn Sa'ud has brought to the whole country, have been buying up land wherever the inhabitants of Saih have been ready to part with it for cash. The depth to the sub-soil water-level in this area is about three fathoms.

The hamlet of Qutain was once walled and considerably larger than now, for it paid for its share in harbouring the refugees of the abortive rebellion of 1912 by being razed to the ground. The outer wall has not since been rebuilt, and the village, some 150 houses in all, now comprises two shapeless, straggling blocks on either side of a branch of the Batin al Hamar. A considerable portion of its former population preferred to break new ground rather than rebuild on the ruins of their old homes, and the result is seen in the compact and comparatively recent hamlets of Atmara and Rifa', which stand close enough together just outside the eastern palm-fringe to be reckoned a single settlement. None of the other hamlets calls for comment except Saih itself, where we rested some hours before returning to our camp after our visit to the reservoirs.

Dismounting before the fairly compact but unwalled hamlet, which stands out clear of the palms at the edge of the bare plain to the east of the oasis, we made our way

[1] *Vide* p. 76 *supra*.

along a dusty street to the residence of Muhammad ibn Fahhad, the *Amir* of the oasis and patriarch of the local *Ashraf*. It was a fairly pretentious building compared with the mud hovels surrounding it, but, like them, of mud-brick; at the farther end of a small courtyard surrounded by sheds or stables a stout wooden door gave admission to a T-shaped hall, which served as coffee-parlour and which was all I saw of the internal arrangements of the dwelling-house. Apart from the *Amir's* residence the hamlet contains two inconspicuous mosques and a few tiny shops, which constitute the *Suq*, and about 200 dwelling-houses.

Our host Muhammad was a patriarch indeed, eighty years of age, but very hale and hearty, of middle height, of rugged, well-weathered frame and bluff of countenance; indeed he looked considerably younger than his tall, somewhat bent and weedy nephew, his brother's son, Fahhad ibn 'Awwad ibn Fahhad, who helped him to do the honours of the occasion. The latter claimed to be under forty years of age, though he not only looked, but actually was, nearer the grave than his robust old uncle, for, the pair having journeyed to Riyadh soon after we left the Aflaj on our southward march, he was suddenly taken ill after their arrival at the capital and was dead before we got back.

Never in all my sojourn in Arabia did I experience so genial a welcome and such profuse hospitality as fell to my lot in this open-hearted household; Ibrahim had sung the old man's praises without stint beforehand, but his praises were short of the mark; Muhammad's hospitality was proverbial in Southern Najd—it would have been proverbial in the whole Orient in the days of Hatim Taiy himself. Here in the midst of the fanatical South was a fearless non-conformist, professing and practising the creed of his ancestors, which was not the creed of his neighbours, upright in all his dealings for which he sought the approval of his own conscience rather than of public opinion, generous to a fault towards the poor and needy, and full of chivalry as his conduct during the rebellion of 1912 proved. He had extended his hospitality and the shelter of his roof to the hapless pretender and his followers during their flight, preferring treason to his king to treason against the laws

of hospitality. He had confessed his crime by flight on the appearance of Ibn Sa'ud, and on the day of the Laila executions he made a dramatic appearance, presenting himself in full public view before the monarch's throne with a halter round his neck and asking no more than punishment for his treason; but the blood of chivalry courses more purely through the veins of the 'Anaza than of all Arabs besides, and Ibn Fahhad yet lives to relate how he was beaten and handsomely beaten at his own game by his sovereign lord the king. Than him, Ibn Sa'ud possesses no subject more loyal, no counsellor more worthy of his confidence, and when I came again to Riyadh I had the pleasure of meeting him time and again in the royal circle, and of hearing his virtues praised in public and in the presence of the pretender himself by Ibn Sa'ud. What always struck me as the most remarkable feature of the *Wahhabi* court was the presence therein of so many who had played a leading part in opposition to their sovereign, but had been converted to his service by the strong blows he dealt them on the battlefield, and his unfailing chivalry in the hour of victory—another lesson culled from the failures of his predecessors.

Muhammad's rough exterior concealed a heart of pure gold, and the few hours I spent in his friendly hall were as a moment snatched in a cool oasis amid the arid waste of Arabian humanity. Twelve generations before him his ancestors, a branch of the *Ashraf* of Yaman, had come forth from their homelands in the neighbourhood of Najran in obedience to the impulse, which from ancient times has driven the surplus population of south-western Arabia in a steady stream north-eastward across the desert peninsula —Yaman is the womb or cradle of the Arabs, as the proverb has it, and Iraq is their grave.[1] Searching for a new home they came to the Aflaj, and, doubtless finding the irrigation system of the ancients in ruinous condition though capable of repair, they settled down among the groves of Saih, which became theirs partly by right of conquest and partly by purchase from *Dausari* owners who had arrived with

[1] "*Al Yaman rihm w'al 'Iraq qabr al 'Arab*": sometimes the word "*Mahd*" = cradle displaces "*Rihm*" = womb.

them or somewhat before. At the present time the family owns about half the oasis, having lost portions of its patrimony by sale to speculators from Laila; "*Nahtaj wa nabi*'" ("Our need compels us to sell"), said my host with characteristic bluntness in reply to my expression of surprise at his parting with the rich groves of his holding. Many years ago, when as a young man he visited Riyadh with his father, he saw the *Imam* Abdulrahman, then an infant in arms, being carried about by a palace slave and his own birth must have taken place about 1840, when Ibn Thunaian occupied the throne of Najd, and not, as he himself declares, in the reign of Turki ten years or more earlier.

As we sat round the walls of the hall with the hearth before us they passed round coffee and incense at frequent intervals, the former being of the true Yaman kind, for no other is tolerated south of Kharj. The village folk, for the most part negro freemen, dropped in from time to time to sip a cup of coffee and hear the news; the war interested them but little, for they are content in their isolation so long as there is no marked interruption in the caravan service, which brings the coffee-berries overland from distant Yaman, and in the supply of piece-goods and sugar from the Hasa ports. My compass and camera aroused their curiosity, but they could not be made to understand the purpose of the latter, which Muhammad had supposed to be a species of telescope; he overwhelmed me with thanks when I promised to make him a present of a pair of field-glasses—a promise which I promptly redeemed on my return to camp. The only furniture of the hall consisted of rough palm-mats spread over the floor with the addition in my honour of a carpet and camel-saddle; Muhammad and his nephew sat opposite to me at the hearth attending to the coffee-making and taking it in turns to disappear behind the scenes, where our breakfast was being prepared. But first they brought in a huge dish of dates and a bowl of curdled milk, cool and refreshing, of which we partook generously; then came the feast preceded by an immense circular mat, which being spread in the centre of the hall slaves appeared with a flat circular dish about three feet in diameter, in which was a steaming wheaten mess cooked

in milk and mixed with fids of sodden bread ; over this they poured *Saman* without stint from a wooden bowl, and last of all they brought in a great tray of meat, the joints of a whole sheep, which they piled upon the *Jirish*, as they call the wheaten mess—something like it is to the *Burghal* of Syria and the *Qaimi* of Najd.

" *Sam*," said our host, whereupon he withdrew with his nephew, lest he should have the satisfaction of seeing us fall upon his good cheer with the healthy appetite it evoked ; we fell to with a will for we were very hungry, and there was nothing left but bones when we rose from the feast. " *In'am allah 'alaikum* " (" May God requite you "), we said to the slave who brought us water to wash in. Muhammad then reappeared and resumed his place at the hearth, deprecating our thanks and preparing coffee as we chatted. Hearing from Ibrahim that I smoked he pressed me to stand on no ceremony, and I took him at his word—a little thing, it may seem, to reckon to his credit, but I smoked in public only on one other occasion in all the time I was in the *Wahhabi* country and that was in the Qasim. " And now," he said, " it is time for you to rest." He disappeared for a moment to return with cushions and rugs and then left us to ourselves for an hour, during which we slept ; my companions were woken up for the afternoon prayer and we then took our leave of a host, whose like is rare anywhere, to return to our tents at Laila.

Somewhat to the south of Saih, and about a mile to the east of the Samhan channel, I saw the broken remnants of a once great circuit-wall with battered bastions still upright at intervals along it ; the plain between these clay ruins and the stream was strewn with cairn-like mounds of stone and mortar resembling those which I had seen on the Qusai'a ridge above the reservoir of 'Ain al Dhila' in Kharj ; and another group of similar ruins was spread about the limestone platform in the region of the pits. Here was perhaps the site of some great city or cemetery of the past—of Persian origin if the character of the canal system in its neighbourhood affords a clue to the identity of those who devised it—but, city or cemetery, there is no trace of it in the annals of the Arabs, who, ignoring the

inconspicuous mounds spread over so vast an area, have concentrated their attention on the more striking but probably comparatively recent clay walls and bastions, which occupy but a small portion of the ruin-field, and, in doing so, have perhaps preserved by accident the remnants of a tradition, which may refer not to them, perhaps not even to the cairn-remnants, but to a yet earlier period of Aflaj history; for they call the ruins Qusairat 'Ad and tell of them the following story:

In times long gone by there reigned over these parts a great king named 'Ad ibn Shaddad, whose capital was at Wubar a month's journey hence in the southern sands near the borders of Hadhr al Maut. Glorying in his power and in the extent and prosperity of his dominions he forgot his God, and regardless of the warnings administered to him by the prophet, Hud, set to to make his central city an earthly Paradise. Among the gardens he laid out for his pleasure he surrounded himself with a princely bodyguard of 2000 chosen warriors, a stable of 2000 peerless steeds and a bevy of 2000 maidens, the fairest in all the world; but there were limits to God's patience and he transgressed them; and *ghadhab Allah 'alaih wa dammaru bil dubar*—God waxed wroth against him and smote him with the west wind, the dread west wind, which blew for eight days without respite and buried 'Ad and all his glory in a sea of sand, which is known to this day from its utter desolation as the Empty Quarter. The fate of 'Ad was a favourite theme [1] of the founder of *Islam* in his denunciations of the perversity of the Meccan idolaters.

The southern and less striking though not less interesting portion of Ancient Aflaj I left to be inspected on the way from Laila to Badi'a, our next stage to the southward. Accordingly, having visited the Kharfa group of villages on the direct southward track, we made a detour to the south-east from Sughu on the morning of May 17. A narrow strip of sand, the continuation of the heavier *Nafud* to the northward, had to be crossed before we found ourselves again on the Ghadhara limestone, which here sloped gently upwards to the east and was intersected in the most compli-

[1] *Vide Quran*, chap. vii.

cated manner by the remains of canals apparently emanating, to judge by their situation, from a parent channel dependent on the lake of Umm al Jabal; these canals were for the most part dug out of the surface of the slope, but one or two appeared to be wholly of masonry on a higher level than the rest, representing perhaps high-level canals to which the others served as distributaries. The limestone of the surface was occasionally varied by patches of firm sandy soil and saline tracts thickly covered with *Hamdh* bushes, in one of which we found the nest of a *Hammara*[1] with three eggs; here and there were little knolls of crumbled limestone and gypsum, while a low ridge of black hillocks, which they class as *Hala* and which may be limestone, runs along the summit of the slope, concealing a tract of undulating blackened downs behind it; the surface of this tract appeared to have a covering of fine sand thickly dotted with small black pebbles and larger rocks of the same colour.

In one of the hollows of these downs we found a fairly extensive ruin-field of cairn-like remnants, in another close by a miserable patch of *Hish* or wild palms, and almost immediately afterwards we found ourselves in the midst of a vast circular expanse of cairns, whose diameter I estimated, as I surveyed it from the summit of a blackened hillock at its south-west corner, to be close on two miles. Immediately beyond it we came upon a broad depression, in whose bed was a straggling line of palms watered by a running stream. Here was undoubtedly some ancient centre of population, but I sought in vain in the depression itself for signs of human habitation, ancient or modern; there was nothing but two little huts, empty though probably used at harvest time by those who visit the grove to gather its dates; we followed the stream up its course to the point whence it issues from its subterranean channel in a narrow runnel not more than a foot deep. The stream is called 'Ain Suwaidan, the position of its source being apparently unknown, and the palm-groves in the depression are known as Ghauta or Ghauta Suwaidan. Beyond these few facts I

[1] A bird about the size of a sparrow, regarding whose identity I cannot speak.

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could gather no clue to the history of the tract or the identity of its past inhabitants; the remnant of its palms belongs to the people of Razaiqiyya, a petty hamlet of half-a-dozen scattered huts in a decadent palm-patch of a few acres in extent about two miles distant to the south-west beyond a belt of crumbling soil much impregnated with salt and profusely covered with *Hamdh* bushes and patches of *Hish*. Our arrival here for a short midday rest created quite a sensation among the people, whose women and children turned out in force and sat down in little groups at a respectful distance watching us with intense interest.

About two miles distant to the southward across a bare limestone plain lay the settlement of Marwan, a narrow belt of palms about a mile long and 200 yards in average width in the bed of the Thuwair watercourse, which, descending from the Tuwaiq uplands enters the rough Ghadhara tract at this point. The village itself, a wretched collection of about forty mud-hovels, lies on the southern side of the palm-belt under a deeply eroded cliff formed by a projecting westward bulge of the Ghadhara, whose surface was strewn with the cairn-like ruins typical of the locality; the bed of the watercourse is much affected by salt, and the palms are irrigated from wells which are said to be brackish, the groves at the western end of the oasis being much denser than those lower down.

We now struck south-westwards across a rough undulating limestone plateau towards Banna, the last and most southerly of the ancient settlements in the depression of the Khirr watercourse, the counterpart of the Thuwair on the southern flank of the bulge. But at about half-way between Marwan and Banna we came across another extensive patch of cairn-ruins disposed round a crater-like depression with a diameter of about fifty yards and a rim so raised above the level of the plateau as to give the impression of a hillock, whose summit has subsided. It may have been the remnants of a fort or other building, but the presence at various points in the neighbourhood of abandoned aqueducts suggested that it was perhaps in bygone times a spring-reservoir like the northern pits; in any case it must have

been another centre of human activity in the past, for the signs of man's handiwork were evident on all sides. There was another depression of similar character about half a mile farther on, with aqueducts apparently trending in the direction of a group of derelict *Qasrs* about a mile to the east of the Banna palms.

The Banna settlement, comprising a single *Qasr* and a palm-belt a quarter-mile long and fifty yards in width, is watered by a running stream called Khuraizan, whose actual source is unknown to the cultivators, though its channel, partly open and partly subterranean with *Kariz* shafts, is traceable for a distance of about two miles due west of the palms. At the time of my visit a few negroes were at work in the last shaft, about three fathoms deep, trying to improve the water-supply, which was extremely feeble, by clearing out the channel, but they seemed to be digging in the dark for they confessed that they did not know from what direction the water was coming ; it looked very much as if the spring, on which the stream depended, was steadily losing its vitality, and as if the palms of Banna were about to share the doom, which had already overtaken so many of the settlements of Ancient Aflaj.

The *Amir* of Badi'a had told me that a strange " written stone " had been unearthed by the workmen engaged on the excavation of the Khuraizan channel and I had set forth on my visit to Banna in high hopes of discovering some documentary clue to the history of the ancient civilisation of the Aflaj, but my hopes were doomed to disappointment, for the negroes, whom I cross-questioned closely on the matter, could produce nothing more interesting than crystal chunks and slabs of limestone grained like marble. Time and careful investigation, if ever this tract is visited by one properly equipped for such a task, may some day solve the problem presented by the widespread ruins and decadent remnants of a region as remarkable as any in desert Arabia, but till that day its history must remain shrouded in mystery. All we know for certain is that man has prospered once, where he prospers no more, be the reason what it may—human folly or Nature's law.

4. Medieval Aflaj

Whoever the earlier inhabitants of the Aflaj may have been, the character of the relics of their handiwork which have survived to our times makes it more than probable that they were not of Arab stock, and that the parent stock, from which they broke off to colonise suitable portions of the interior of Arabia, had already made very much greater progress on the path of civilisation than any of the indigenous Arab communities of those times except the Sabaeans of the south-west corner of the peninsula. The persistence in the Aflaj to this day of an *'Adite* tradition, and the meagre nature of the data at our disposal, coupled with the knowledge that the south-western highlands have been for centuries the source of the human stream, which has peopled the deserts of Arabia, must necessarily make us cautious in ascribing to the ancient prosperity of these central provinces an eastern rather than a south-western origin; but the absence of ruins of the type found in Aflaj and Kharj at any point on the road south of the former and particularly in the valley of Wadi Dawasir together with the remarkable similarity of the canal-systems of the Aflaj, of Kharj, of the Hasa and of the Qatif district, and the knowledge that the east coast of Arabia was in former times, and for a considerable period, under Persian domination, make it only natural to look to the east rather than to the south-west for an explanation of the phenomena found in these parts.

It is unnecessary to labour a point which we are not in a position to settle; however that may be, there can be no doubt that subsequent colonisation of the Aflaj province took place from the south-west in successive waves of invasion of which three at least can be traced in the traditions and population of the tract. One of these, the *Ashraf* invasion of some three centuries ago, I have already noted in discussing the oasis of Saih; the oasis of Badi'a preserves the record of the others.

Before leaving Laila to resume our southward march we had had to make some slight changes in our party to fill the places of the two Muhammads, who were unable to accompany us beyond the limits of the Aflaj on account

of outstanding blood-feuds with the Wudda'in section of the Dawasir into whose territory we should pass on leaving the Hasan country, whose southern limit is the Maqran depression. It was with very genuine regret that I parted with the lad, who had joined us at Dilam, and whom I shall always remember as one of the outstanding few—Izmai, Mitrak, Jabir, Hasan the *'Arqani*, and a few others—who served me more than well during my sojourn in Arabia. On our arrival at Umm al Shinadhir, where lived his wife, whom he had not seen for months, he scorned the idea of leaving us before his contract was fulfilled and came on next day to Laila, where he remained with us until the day before our departure when he took his leave and went off to his home. Such altruism is rare indeed in an Arab, and Tami did not let it pass without a gibe, but Muhammad got the best of the encounter and had no cause, I trust, so far as I was concerned, to regret the literal fulfilment of his bond. He would certainly have gone with us to the south, had it not been for the blood-feud, which had arisen out of the slaughter of a man of the Wudda'in by his brother, and for the settlement of which he had for many years past been trying to collect the blood-money, which custom has fixed at 800 dollars for a human life, to appease the relations of the victim; Ibn Sa'ud had contributed 100 dollars to the fund, which now stood at little more than 300, and it would take many years before the full sum was realised. His namesake was a phlegmatic, undistinguished individual, whose five years' courtship of the shepherdess, who was now his wife, argued a strain of romance which one would scarcely have suspected from his dull exterior and listless manner, and I could not help feeling that his plea of a blood-feud with the Wudda'in was a mere ruse to secure an early return to his bride, but I raised no objection to his departure in the hope that we might be able to replace him by a more communicative member of the same tribe. The two vacancies were filled by the inclusion in our party of one Salih, a native of Wadi Najran and member of the 'Arqa tribe, which through Yam ancestry claims kinship with the Shamir and 'Ajman, and, as our guide, Tuwairish, a *Wudda-'ani* of the Hanish section, whose home was Sulaiyil—a

cockney of the cockneys, with a horrible nasal twang and an abrupt unpleasing manner, to which was added a conspicuous absence of the quality for which Ibrahim had engaged his services—a knowledge of the country. One other recruit offered himself in somewhat curious circumstances; we were riding through the oasis of Kharfa, and I was alone ahead of the rest, when I observed one wearing the fillet head-dress of the *Ikhwan* coming towards me from one side; not wishing to offend him by a gratuitous salutation I held on my way as if I had not seen him, but his movements were quite deliberate, and as he drew alongside he accosted me: "*Salam 'alaikum.*" "*Wa'alaikum al salam,*" I replied, and he rode with me conversing; I told him whither we were bound and asked him questions about the Wadi, to which he replied as man to man without any apparent distaste for my company or desire to hasten on; he was, he told me, of the *Subai' Ikhwan* of Dhaba'a, had been there when we passed through and had heard of me; he was now bound for Badi'a in connection with the purchase of a *Dhalul*, but it was likely to cost more than he could pay. "Look," said I, "if you are in need of money, why not go with me to the Wadi? and by the time you return you will have enough to buy the camel." The idea of enrolling one of his kind of his own free will in my party appealed to me, and to my surprise he expressed his willingness to go, so I invited him to have breakfast with us, explaining at the same time that he would have to arrange with Ibrahim about joining our party. We parted after breakfast, I being under the impression that he would rejoin us at Badi'a, but I never saw him again and learned afterwards that Ibrahim had discouraged his aspirations—perhaps for good reasons.

The sand-strip, which I have mentioned already as the boundary between Ancient and Modern Aflaj, continues southwards along the eastern edge of the Ghadhara to a point beyond the Badi'a oasis, to protect which from farther encroachment by the sand from the north a line of *Ithils*, known as Sadda, has been planted fairly recently athwart the direction of the prevailing northerly winds; but the precaution appears to have been belated for the sand is

piled up high against the northern and eastern flanks of the oasis and the palm-groves have already suffered much from this cause.

Situated at a distance of about twenty miles to the south-west of Laila, the oasis of Badi'a, which is said to have been the premier settlement of the province during the first stages of the Arab invasion from the south-west, occupies an area of about four square miles, a considerable part of which in the sum is covered with straggling palm-groves of poor quality, while the rest, perhaps more than half of the whole area, is waste land interrupted by occasional patches of corn-land, inhabited sites and the ruins of former habitations. Lying athwart the two branches into which the Sha'ib Hasraj bifurcates soon after issuing from the Tuwaiq uplands and which irrigate its northern and southern portions under the names of Harm and Khirr respectively, the oasis falls into three well-marked divisions known as Salma, Quraina, and Haddam. The Khirr channel forms the boundary between the first two, which between them account for the whole of the present inhabited and cultivable area of the oasis, while the Haddam section, lying eastward and north-east of Salma, consists of nothing but the tumbled ruins of a considerable town largely overlaid by drift-sand. The Salma, or northern section, which occupies about two-thirds of the whole cultivable area, receives irrigation from the Harm torrent, whose flood is generally exhausted by its fields and groves, and to a less extent from the Khirr, which, being the stronger of the two channels, not only supplies Quraina with water, but is strong enough in flood to have carved a deep channel for itself across the Ghadhara, which almost impinges on the settlement at this point, to Banna. For the rest the groves of both sections depend on numerous wells, averaging a depth of seven or eight fathoms to water, on which camel-traction is largely employed. The cultivation of the oasis is of the type already encountered in the settlements farther north, but Badi'a marks the southward limit of the pomegranate, which for some reason is not found in the settlements of Wadi Dawasir.

The prominent hillock of Qurain, about a mile eastward

of Quraina on the Ghadhara and overlooking the right bank of the Khirr, is surrounded by an extensive ruin-field of cairn-remnants, which doubtless date back to the period described in the last section and may be considered as forming part of the old Banna settlement rather than of Badi'a, whose first occupants, according to a tradition retailed to me by the *Amir*, were the tribe or family of Al Asfar. Of the origin and history of this clan nothing is known except that it was driven out or exterminated by the 'Anaza clan of Jumaila, who held the province or at any rate this part of it until they in turn yielded to an irresistible incursion of the Dawasir and passed on northwards before the storm leaving no trace of their occupation except a remnant, which, as I shall relate in due course, has held out to this day in the Aflaj uplands of Tuwaiq. Apart from the ancient ruins of Qurain, the first settled site of Badi'a is undoubtedly represented by the ruins of Haddam, whose stout clay walls and imposing mansions suggest that it was a fortified city of great size and considerable importance, perhaps of 'Anaza construction, if we may disregard the Asfar tradition, which may represent nothing more than a vague legend of the distant past like the '*Adite* legend of Saih.

Be that as it may, the 'Anaza must have occupied, if they did not build, Haddam, which has been a heap of ruins as long as living memory goes back, and was probably reduced to that state by the Dawasir invaders, who substituted for the common centre of their predecessors the scattered hamlets, which illustrate better than anything else the intensity of their parochial jealousies and the fratricidal divisions, which have made the name of the tribe a by-word in Central Arabia. As was the case with the rest of the province, it was the Hasan group which provided settlers for the oasis of Badi'a, whose two sections are still held by the descendants of their first occupants, the Sukhabira section in the case of Salma and the Shakara in that of Quraina. In the former are a number of petty hamlets and *Qasrs*, the chief of which is Salma itself in the midst of the oasis on the bank of the Harm; contiguous to it is a hamlet called Suq—the two having apparently formed a single village until the surrounding fortifications

were dismantled by 'Abdullah ibn Sa'ud on the occasion of a rising against his authority at about the same time as that of Mubarraz. Remnants of the old wall still stand, but Suq is for all practical purposes an open hamlet dominated by the high walls[1] and massive bastions of Salma, which were either spared by 'Abdullah or have since been rebuilt. The two together contain no more than fifty houses in all; other hamlets of this section are Butina containing about thirty houses, Umm al Zubaiyara and Mishrif, the last two in ruins, and the last situated about a mile outside the fringe of the oasis to the northward. The settlements of the southern section are Quraina itself, a compact hamlet of about thirty houses, Qasr al A'la somewhat smaller and some scattered *Qasrs*. The settled population of Badi'a can scarcely exceed 1000 souls, though this number may be doubled if the nomad element dependent on the oasis is taken into consideration. In former times the cultivated area appears to have been surrounded by a circuit wall, but only patches of it are now left, the rest having been demolished either by 'Abdullah ibn Sa'ud, or, more probably, by the Dawasir themselves when they first occupied the tract.

We were welcomed on our arrival by the *Amir* of Salma, Mardhi by name, a member of the Sukhabira, who for all his advanced years busied himself actively to see that we had everything necessary to our comfort; he dined with us the following night and proved to be a dull, taciturn old man, who told me, however, what I have here recorded of the history of the oasis, and was himself an eye-witness of the vengeance of 'Abdullah. His son, Muhammad, a man of about forty, was a pleasant, well-spoken individual, and was good enough to accompany me on my visit to Banna in search of the "written stone"; the third generation of the same family, the ten-year-old son of Muhammad, accompanied his grandfather to dine with us.

5. On the Fringe of the Empty Quarter

South of the Aflaj province the vast wilderness of Biyadh, whose western rim runs down almost due south

[1] About forty feet high.

for more than 100 miles from the latitude of Kharj, thrusts forward a broad double-headed promontory of desolation to the westward, impinging on the outer slopes of the Tuwaiq plateau, whose pent-up drainage, diverted in part to north and south of the projection, along the lines of least resistance, has developed its main attack on the central mass of the bulge, which it has pushed back between the two heads to form the broad wedge of the Maqran embayment, where, leaving the harder rock-masses to cumber the depression as isolated hill features, the two great plateau torrents of Shutba and Dhaba'iyya have developed broad well-wooded valleys converging on a deeply eroded channel, which carries their flood-waters through the Haqaf barrier into the desert.

In former times within human memory, if local report can be trusted, in times when there was less security for the wayfarer, and the Maqran depression was waterless except in the season of floods, the heavily laden coffee-caravans from the south used to fetch a circuit along the outer flanks of this desert promontory on their way to the Aflaj by way of the petty oasis of Shutba within the folds of Tuwaiq, where alone was water to be had between Hamam and Badi'a. In those days the journey must have been at least half as long again as it is now, for the direct south-westerly route, which we followed to Sulaiyil—about 120 miles—strikes across the Biyadh promontory along its base by way of the Maqran pools, which provide an intermediate watering between Badi'a and Hamam.

For some eight miles after leaving Badi'a our course led us over what remained of the Aflaj plain, whose surface, sloping easily to the south-east, was of a light sandy loam varied by broad strips of gravel, with a good deal of rough scrub vegetation. Midway we crossed the shallow sandy bed of Sha'ib Musarja, a petty freshet from the uplands, and soon thereafter we reached the boundary of the province in the well-marked bed of Sha'ib Hunnu, a sandy watercourse about fifty yards broad flowing between banks two feet high from the Tuwaiq on the west along the northern flank of the Biyadh promontory and into the wilderness to the east. About its banks was much vegetation—bushes of *Sharr* and *Salam* and grasses of many kinds.

THE RESERVOIR OF MAQRAU, WITH DAWASIR CAMELS WATERING.

Beyond it a little hillock called Khufaisa hard by a drainage-runnel of the same name marked the beginning of the true wilderness, or vast expanse of grey pebble-strewn desert bounded only by its own horizon, towards which it sloped upwards by a scarcely perceptible gradient. The summit of the hillock gave me a wide but uninspiring view ; behind us lay the drab plain of the Aflaj with its tiny specks of green backed by the wall of Tuwaiq ; before us the Empty Quarter, the fringe of whose waterless waste we were about to traverse, for the Arabs rightly reckon the Biyadh as the threshold of the Rub' al Khali, though the sands, to which our geographers are wont to restrict that name, are many days distant to south and east ; the gentle undulations of the foreground were as waves of a sea breaking on the shore-line, the smooth desert beyond a silent rolling ocean ruffled here and there by a ragged ridge.

The passage of countless caravans had left a broad track deep-scored in the hard soil alongside the channel of Sha'ib Sudair, which drains the northern slopes of this tract towards the Hunnu. Along it we trailed wearily enough amid that scene of desolation to its head in some rough ground, which marked the divide between the northern drainage and that which finds its way into the Maqran depression ; there was scarcely a feature to relieve the deadly monotony of those forty miles across the first head of the desert promontory. In one place by the roadside was a cairn of curious structure, formed of sharp slabs of rock set up on end with a pathway, lined on either side with similar slabs, extending from it towards the track ; close by were two flat slabs of rock set about fifteen feet apart—this they call Tamrat al Hadhab, as we might say the giant's stride, but what the meaning of it all was or who Hadhab may have been they could not tell me. Some three or four miles on stands a tall, solitary *Talh* tree, a favourite midday halting-place, known as Shajrat 'Awwad ; beyond it as far again near the head of the *Sha'ib* was a patch of cairns, remarkably like the ruins of old Aflaj though too far from any possible centre of habitation to be classed with them ; here the surface of the desert became broken with scattered ridges and its colour changed from grey to drab with streaks and patches

of black, the limestone being overlaid by a thin covering of sandstone with flat-topped or conical excrescences blackened as if by fire.

The first sign of life we met on the way was a party of women of the Huwamila, *Shaikh* Sahmi's section, trekking from their encampment in the neighbourhood of the Maqran towards Laila for provisions. The women, a dozen or so, rode together in front of their escort of four or five men, with whom we exchanged greetings and news; they were glad to hear of their chief's return from the expedition to Jabrin, but disappointed with its results. Soon afterwards we passed a party of six negroes of the Wullamin of the Wadi itself on their way, they told us, to earn a livelihood on the pearl-beds of the east coast; thus do many of the denizens of the interior, returning for the most part after some years of strenuous toil with a few hundreds of dollars sufficient to enable them to marry and set up house with perhaps a few sheep or a camel into the bargain, and to live in comparative affluence for the rest of their days; some return no more, lured by the charms of a seafaring life or the luxuries of town life in a far country. They would march, they said, to Yamama and thence along the Sahaba, watering at the wells of Wasi'a south of Abu Jifan, and across the Dahana to the Hasa; there is a direct road from Wusaila to the Hasa by way of the Wasi'a wells, but it is only the adventurous or those who are familiar with the country who would risk being lost in the Biyadh, a fifty-mile width of pathless desert according to Mitrak who had done the journey. Towards evening we passed another party—a small convoy of camels, nine of which were laden with Yaman coffee in great bags—each containing eighty *Waznas* [1] of the precious berries; they were bound for Hauta, the northerly limit of the regular coffee-trade at the present time, for at Riyadh and beyond, the Yaman berry is a luxury fetched from the Hauta market by those who can afford to do so.

At Badi'a the previous day I had smoked the last remnant of my tobacco. The baggage I was expecting from Kuwait had not arrived by the time we left Riyadh and I had left

[1] *Vide* p. 175 *infra*.

instructions for its urgent despatch after me on arrival, but still there was no sign of its coming and the future looked black indeed, for not only my tobacco but my stock of films had reached a low ebb, and it was exasperating to be without those two necessaries of a traveller's life. However, there was nothing to be done but be as patient as one could; films were only a degree more unprocurable than tobacco, for, search as they might in the Aflaj settlements, the only tobacco that Ibrahim and his fellows could find was less than a quarter of an ounce—the measure of a coffee-cup—for which its owner, a woman of Saih, brazenly demanded two dollars. The charge was a villainous bit of profiteering which I refused to countenance, and we continued our journey tobacco-less—tobacco-less to remain for twenty days, for there was none to be had in the Wadi, and I had to await the tardy arrival of my own on June 6. Ibrahim and Rushaid felt the exhaustion of our supply as acutely as myself, but it is only justice to them to relate that on the last day they insisted on what remained of the common stock being reserved for my use with the result that I had three pipes more than they before we were all in the same box. Ibrahim, however, indulged in a final orgy by scraping out the ashes of all our pipes and smoking the result.

The divide between the northward and southward drainages is an undulating plateau, comprising a series of depressions known collectively as Al Karmidiyat from Karmidiyya, the name of one of the largest of them;[1] each of these is a self-contained bottom with a few acacia and other bushes. From the higher ground separating one from another we began to have forward views of the eminences of the Maqran depression: the diminutive sandstone sierra of Fard and the ridge of Mughali to west and south-west towards Tuwaiq; the ridge and table-topped hill of Al Kadrat and the low ridge of Khutaimiyya to south-east on our left; and southward towards the Maqran watering the black ridge of 'Aqra, the black cone of 'Ubaid al Maqran, the long yellowish ridge of Barqat al Sukun, and the black rounded hillock of Dannan marking the site of an extinct

[1] The names of the others are: Niq'at al Shujaira; Musarha; Nuqai'at al 'Abid; Abu Talha; and Umm Samra.

water-hole; in the valleys before us showed the dark patches of well-grown trees. The whole country looked as if it had been scorched by a gigantic conflagration.

The southward slope with the shallow runnels of the Muraikha and Hawi *Sha'ibs* was dotted with the grazing camels of the Huwamila, whose numbers increased as we passed into the well-wooded bed of Sha'ib Hauza'iyya, the source of which was in the Fard ridge, and thence into the Shutba, one of the two great valleys of the Maqran depression. A buried *Jalib* near the junction of these two told of a past watering-place, which has been supplanted by one of those curious phenomena of the desert, a *Khafs*, to which we came through a thick screen of well-grown acacias, *Sarha* and other trees, one of three such ponds whose recent formation —for they seem to have been formed well within living memory—has made the Maqran tract a stage on the great south road, and a favourite resort of herding *Badawin*.

Our arrival at the first *Khafs*, where we made a midday halt of four hours, coincided with one of the periodic waterings of the Huwamila, whose ponderous dark-hued cattle—the Dawasir camels are noted for their great size and milk-giving properties—are driven in to the *Khufus* every fourth or fifth day from the Biyadh and other pastures in the neighbourhood. Here, the tents of the herdsmen being pitched in scattered groups all over the valley, they take it in turns household by household to drive their animals down to the water—a process, which, from beginning to end, may spread over two days. The tents of this section are of the poorest description, consisting of short lengths of ragged black worsted spread on short poles or, in some cases, of no more than strips of palm matting extended on poles with a covering of leafy branches wrenched from the surrounding trees; as a general rule each tent accommodates one family, but in some cases, I was told, two brothers would make shift with a single tent, their families occupying separate ends of the covered space with no partition between them, and apparently without embarrassment. They offered no objection to our camping in their midst, and even made way for us to water our camels at our convenience, but otherwise showed no disposition to make our closer acquaint-

ance, though groups of women and children with nothing better to do loitered inquisitively about my tent. We also opened negotiations with them with a view to the purchase of a *Dhalul*, for I was anxious to take back a really good animal as a present to Ibn Sa'ud, and had an opportunity of examining one, for which they demanded 300 dollars, but the affair went no further as they would not agree to our taking the beast on approval.

The *Khafs*, at which we halted, was a star-shaped crack in the earth about fifty yards long and thirty broad, with a water depth of about three feet in the middle and gently sloping banks. Surrounded by a dense coppice of shady trees, it lay somewhat to one side of the valley close under a ridge of the Biyadh and was connected with the flood channel of the Shutba by a number of narrow runnels. About a mile downstream of this point near a sandstone hillock called Barqat al Mani' the Shutba valley, which runs down from the Tuwaiq slopes along the northern flank of the Mughali ridge, joins that of the Dhaba'iyya, which comes down along the other side of the same ridge, to form a single channel passing through the Biyadh cliff between the Dannan hillock and the 'Aqra ridge. A central gap in the Mughali ridge sends down a lesser *Sha'ib*, Umm al 'Atur, to join the Shutba near Barqat al Mani'; the Hauza'iyya descending from the Fard ridge, and the Hawi and Muraikha, its tributaries, have already been mentioned, and the drainage network of the Maqran depression is completed by the Sahab, which flows down into the Dhaba'iyya from the upland of Farda ibn Mawwash, the second head of the Biyadh promontory. A thin tongue of sand extending towards the Tuwaiq between the Mughali and Farda ibn Mawwash heights separates the Dhaba'iyya from the Sahab, which, flowing along the Biyadh cliff, collects on its way the drainage of a number of petty *Sha'ibs* descending from the uplands in that direction.

The Dhaba'iyya valley after its junction with the Sahab runs along the Biyadh cliff under the 'Aqra ridge in a broad grassy expanse dotted with thick patches of *Sharr* bushes and *Talh* trees, and contains the two remaining *Khufus*, situated close together at a distance of about two miles

upstream of the junction of the two main valleys. The smaller of the two, about twenty yards long and fifteen broad, is a deep cleft close under the cliff; its bottom is covered with a two-foot depth of water, above which the banks rise abruptly some six or seven feet with sharply inclined approaches leading down in several places to the water's edge for the use of camels and men. The other *Khafs*, the largest of the three, is an oblong sheet of water, eighty yards long and twenty broad, surrounded and overshadowed by tall *Talh* trees, and containing about three feet of water with banks about two feet above the water-level; a good many *Badawin* were encamped round it watering their camels.

Our camp that night was pitched in the Sahab channel under the Biyadh cliff, and next morning we resumed our march up the latter to its source on the summit of the second head of the promontory between the Farda ibn Mawwash ridge on our right and that of Musaijirat on the left. Beyond this point, which marks the southern limit of the Hasan country and the beginning of the territory of the Wadi groups, we descended over the rough undulating surface of the Biyadh to the valley of Sha'ib Ghudaiyir, a narrow strip of broken, bushy country between the Biyadh cliff on the one hand, and a low ridge[1] on the other, overlooking the outer slopes of Tuwaiq and the Marran *Sha'ib*, which drains it, parallel to the Ghudaiyir, southwards towards Hamam. The *Sha'ib* bed exhibited a thick undergrowth of coarse *Thamam* grass and bushes of *Sarha* and *Salam* covered with torpid locusts and shrill crickets—the latter in myriads. The floods of the past season had left numerous pools in parts of the depression, at one of which we again watered our camels. Eagles or some similar bird circled about us aloft, gazelles, the whitish sort known as *Rim*, were very plentiful, and a dash of colour was added to the scene by a bird which seemed to me no other than a blue jay.

The day's march was not particularly long, but the camels, in spite of an unexpected drink, were beginning to show signs of exhaustion, when we espied the palms of Hamam

[1] Called Umm Jadar.

in the offing, and decided to halt short of the settlement. Our party had been augmented at the Maqran by two men of the Dimnan section of the Al Murra bound for Sulaiyil, neither of whom proved very exhilarating or communicative, and the monotony of the journey was only broken by the passage of a coffee-caravan of seventeen camels on the way to the Aflaj. The previous day Tami had met with a curious accident, which was only now making its effects felt; he and Ibn Jilham had stopped for a drink of water, and while Tami was engaged with head thrown back and arms uplifted imbibing the contents of his companion's water-skin, his *Dhalul* moved suddenly forward with the result that his little toe, catching in Ibn Jilham's saddle-gear, was nearly wrenched off, the bone being broken and left protruding through the skin. The broken toe was patched up with dirty wrappings and the incident forgotten till the following evening, when the wretched Tami complained of pain and faintness and went to bed without his dinner. For some days afterwards he experienced some difficulty in walking, but within ten days the damage was sufficiently repaired for all practical purposes, and it was not long before the toe resumed its normal appearance and all signs of the fracture had disappeared.

6. William Gifford Palgrave in Arabia

In a most fascinating and inspiring volume published in 1904, under the title of *The Penetration of Arabia*, Mr. D. G. Hogarth, who, in addition to his many other accomplishments, possesses an unparalleled knowledge of the great desert peninsula and all that therein is, took advantage of a " marked pause in its exploration " to take stock of modern knowledge of that little-known country, basing his work on all the available data bequeathed to the world by a long line of explorers and seekers after truth, gain, fame, or adventure. To that book, a copy of which accompanied me through all my travels, I owed the inspiration, which had led me across Arabia the previous year, and had now impelled me beyond the farthest limits attained by my predecessors in a southward direction; and not to the book alone, but

to the author himself, whose acquaintance appropriately enough I had the good fortune to make at Jidda, at the conclusion of a journey which would never have been undertaken but for his summary of our knowledge, as it then was, of those parts.

In these circumstances it may seem somewhat ungracious to criticise a work, to which I owe so much, but on one point criticism is inevitable and imperative, and my criticism is directed not at Mr. Hogarth or the conclusions he has drawn from the evidence before him, but at one, whom with too great trust, he took at something approaching his own valuation, placing him in the forefront of the authorities, on whom he based his survey of Arabia. How little William Gifford Palgrave, the Jesuit adventurer, deserved such confidence will appear from what follows, but I make bold at once to say that those who know Arabia from the inside will agree with me in dissenting from the judgment that "among Arabian explorers, when all counts are considered —the area covered, the risk incurred, the success attained —only Doughty can justly be compared to Palgrave." [1] The author of *Arabia Deserta*, the greatest epic in all the literature of travel, stands indeed in a class by himself, comparable to none that went before him or succeeded him in the deserts of Arabia, but least of all to him, whose *Odyssey* is, as Mr. Hogarth says, the antithesis [2] of his own, its antithesis, I would add, in every respect. Years ago as a boy at school I read Palgrave's *Travels* and marvelled at his amazing adventures, little dreaming that some day I should re-read the same tale with a more critical mind in Arabia itself in a futile attempt to fit the facts of my own experience into the skilfully contrived scheme of his narrative. The effort was vain except on the assumption that the physical facts of Arabia have undergone a drastic modification in the half-century, which has elapsed since his visit; and such an assumption, improbable as it is in itself, is placed out of court once and for all by the pregnant pages of the two great volumes, in which Doughty, visiting the country only some fifteen years later, has left a description, complete and final for all time, of all that he saw and suffered

[1] D. G. H. p. 307. [2] D. G. H. p. 307.

therein. It was my good fortune, through the generosity of a friend [1] not personally known to me, to receive those volumes while I was still in Arabia, and to read them among some of the scenes which inspired them, and of which they contain so splendid a description. With the perversity characteristic of mortal man I searched that narrative for flaws and found it flawless. It would be impertinent in me to commend it further.

Palgrave was made of very different stuff, though his narrative is always so elusive and his excursions into topographical detail so puzzling, that, faced with the alternatives of rejecting the evidence of my own senses or of discounting the frequent conflict of his statements and descriptions with the facts and features to which they refer as the outcome of the natural vanity and garrulity of an unobservant poetaster, I adopted the latter course almost instinctively until, as my own growing knowledge of the country enabled me to see it in ever clearer perspective, it became impossible to do so any longer, more especially when his *Travels*, being the only professedly first-hand European account of the country between Riyadh and the Aflaj province, became my sole guide during the first days of my journey to the southward. During these days I came to the conclusion that Palgrave had never in fact visited the Aflaj province, and the first communication of my opinion to that effect with a summary of the evidence on which it was based was made in an official report of my excursion to the southern provinces, written soon after my return to Riyadh and subsequently printed as an official memorandum in India and Egypt. On April 28, 1919, soon after my return to England, I adverted to the subject somewhat more briefly in a paper on Southern Najd read before the Royal Geographical Society, in connection with which Mr. Hogarth challenged the conclusions at which I had arrived and the evidence on which I had based them. In reply to that challenge I developed my attack on Palgrave's veracity over a wider field and a year later, having occasion in a second paper, read before the Royal Geographical Society, to animadvert unfavourably on the faithfulness of Palgrave's description

[1] J. Mungavin, Esq., at the time Political Agent at Bahrain.

of the Dahana, I had the satisfaction of receiving striking support for my view from an unexpected quarter, while Mr. Hogarth refrained from further comment on the matter. The question has aroused a good deal of interest in other quarters, and is of sufficient importance in itself to merit detailed consideration, both because Palgrave is no longer alive to defend himself and is therefore entitled to a favourable verdict unless the evidence against him is overwhelming, and because the history of the penetration of Arabia cannot be satisfactorily written until his place in the roll of Arabian explorers has been determined so far as it is now possible to do so.

That he has exercised during the past sixty years a very marked influence on European conceptions of Arabia cannot be doubted by any one who has read Mr. Hogarth's book. With the slow but steady accumulation of knowledge about the interior of the peninsula that influence tends to grow less, and I maintain that we now already know enough to justify a drastic revision of Mr. Hogarth's finding that "in much of southern Nejd we must use Palgrave as our authority because there is no other; in Hasa we use him in preference to all others."[1] In what follows I hope to show that Palgrave has sinned in being responsible for the rejection of the conclusions—arrived at, it is true, at second hand but none the less essentially more sound than his own—of his predecessors in the study of Arabian geography, and that, careless of his responsibility to posterity, he has given us of certain parts of Arabia detailed accounts little justified by the facts and drawn largely from the rich store of his own imagination.

From the Hasa to Riyadh I followed in the reverse direction the tracks of the last stage of his long journey; in Riyadh I sojourned seventy days in all against his forty-two; from Riyadh southward to Kharfa in the Aflaj I again followed his steps; while farther north I journeyed over ground traversed by him between Buraida and Qusaiba and between the first-named place and Mudhnib and Zilfi. Of the country between his starting-point at Ma'an *via* Jauf and Hail and Qusaiba I know nothing, while of that

[1] D. G. H. p. 236.

between Zilfi and Riyadh I cannot speak except for the Wadi Hanifa between Sadus and the capital. In every section of the journey within my ken Palgrave may be convicted of the grossest errors, the cumulative effect of which is overwhelming, but I shall make a beginning with his excursion from Riyadh to the Aflaj, the description[1] of which first aroused my suspicions of his veracity.

"In order," he writes, in his usual breezy style, as if about to describe an expedition of little interest or importance, "not to interrupt the subsequent continuity of our Riad narrative, I will here insert a few words about a short excursion by Barakat and myself to the Aflaj." Furnished "as usual with the convenient pretext" of medical practice he set forth one day in the second week of November[2] accompanied by his faithful henchman, Barakat, and a new acquaintance, Bedaa', whose unfortunate name[3] did not prevent him from being a "lively, good-natured fellow," and a "great lover of diversion and pleasure." He it was who had proposed the trip.

Following a south-western track, they crossed Wadi Hanifa on to a southern plateau more broken and uneven than that north of the *Wadi*, but of the same limestone or calcareous formation and preserved from the reproach of barrenness by the presence of occasional trees and fair pasture. For several miles the course of the winter torrents lay towards Wadi Hanifa[4] but then changed to take a southerly direction. On the evening of the first day they reached and halted at the village of Safra on the borders of 'Aridh—a village of scarce sixty dwellings, some of which were of palm-branches and thatch, surrounded by ruinous walls of unbaked brick and adorned with a neat and new mosque.

Next day their course lay for several hours amid "denes" with occasional sand valleys and on a gradual but perceptible descent to the south-west. They "were now in Aflaj." About noon they passed the large village of Meshallah

[1] W. G. P. vol. ii. pp. 79 to 82. [2] 1862. [3] Meaning *Heresy*.

[4] *I.e.* in a northerly direction, for, according to Palgrave (*vide* vol. ii. p. 125), "the Haneefah valley itself goes no farther eastward than Manfoohah."

with extensive but thinly set palm-groves and "wells far from copious." Here he noticed cotton more plentiful than in 'Aridh, and the men and women wearing shorter shirts. Here they abode during the heat of noon in a small house, with whose tenants Bedaa' claimed a pedlar's acquaintance.

From Meshallah to Kharfa the way lay "mostly in a gorge of some depth," dry, but with traces of a winter torrent, and on either side above covered with excellent pastures and flocks, while in its bottom were "a few palm-groves with gardeners' huts beside." Night fell before they reached Kharfa and they rested in the sandy palm-sprinkled plain beside the walls.

Next day forgetting the "convenient pretext" of medical practice, which had brought them thither, they thought it inadvisable to present themselves before the governor of the province, "who resides here," and whom Bedaa' declined to visit. The town, besides being the seat of the provincial governor, contained rather more than 8000 inhabitants, half of whom were mulattoes contenting themselves "with a ragged cloth round the waist" by way of clothing. He notes a meagre hospitality and "a want of sociability and coarseness of manners reminding of Wadi Dowasir, whose first limits are in fact only fifteen or twenty miles hence to the south." They remained at Kharfa till the afternoon and then retraced their steps by the way they had come, but the return journey is left undescribed.

Before discussing the problems raised by this full summary of Palgrave's southern excursion it will be convenient to consider and dispose of some of the information gleaned in the course of it admittedly at second hand from Bedaa' and various other persons, residents of Safra, Meshallah, and Kharfa. "For the well-known route leading through Wadi Haneefah to the north of Aflaj and passing through Shakra', and thence south of Ṭoweyk to Mecca, I heard its marches and halts repeatedly detailed by the many who had travelled it in either direction. Their account corresponded very exactly with what appears in the German map published in Gotha, 1835, after the researches of Niebuhr, Ehrenberg and Rüppell. This is the high road of Central Arabia." Unfortunately I have not been able to discover a

copy of the map referred to, but it may be assumed that its essential features have been incorporated in that published[1] with Palgrave's volumes. That map shows a caravan route going down from the north-west to Shaqra, and thence through the Tuwaiq along the course of Wadi Hanifa to Riyadh, whence it strikes south-west *via* Kharfa and Wadi Dawasir to Bisha and finally turns north-west to Taïf and Mecca. In other words the high road of Central Arabia, one end of which is at Mecca and the other somewhere north-west of Shaqra, deliberately follows three sides of an oblong between the latter and the former instead of striking out in a bee-line between those points. We now know that as a matter of fact Mecca is connected with the Qasim, with Shaqra and with Riyadh, to say nothing of its connections with the Aflaj and Wadi Dawasir, by direct routes, some of which traverse the Tuwaiq, while none of them run south of it, and that no such "high road" as that referred to in the passage here quoted exists. Palgrave at any rate, if he really went to Kharfa, must have been in a position to realise this fact, but his account makes it clear that he failed to see the massive barrier of Tuwaiq between him and the west trending ever southward. The same failure enabled him to slope the surface of the country to the south-west instead of to east and south-east as it actually lies.

His account of Wadi Dawasir and the position he assigned to it in relation to Kharfa are equally wide of the mark. No one resident at Kharfa or acquainted with the country beyond it could have told him that the first limits of the Wadi might be reached from Kharfa in a moderate day's journey, or, as he goes out of his way to explain, in about fifteen or twenty miles. This estimate of a day's journey has an important bearing on another part of this discussion but he spares us much uneasiness on this score by adverting to it on more than one occasion in the very pages in which he describes his southern journey. "The length of the Wadi," he says, "is stated to be ten days' journey, say about two hundred miles," that is to say, an average daily journey of twenty miles, for caravans of course—a very reasonable estimate; again, "Kela'at Bisha is about two days (or

[1] Engraved by J. Sulzer, Berlin, and printed by F. Barth, 1865.

forty miles) distant from Wadi Dowasir." He leaves us at any rate in no doubt that his estimate of a reasonable day's journey by camel is twenty miles.[1]

Of Sulaiyil, "a wretched district, full of sand-hills, and with little water," he heard that it lay three days' journey southward of Wadi Dowasir—another point on which information gleaned in the Aflaj could hardly have misled him, seeing that Sulaiyil is the first important oasis in the way of people travelling, as they frequently do, between the Aflaj settlements and Wadi Dawasir. Najran he places only two days distant from Sulaiyil, but, after all, these are errors based on hearsay and therefore to some extent pardonable, and concern districts which I shall have occasion to describe in detail in the next chapter.

I now turn to the consideration of Palgrave's account of his visit to Kharfa in the Aflaj province. Much of my argument turns on the question of the distance between Kharfa and Riyadh and the possibility or probability of its being traversed in the circumstances indicated by Palgrave in the space of two days, or, let us say, sixteen hours in all.[2] His estimate of a reasonable day's journey for a caravan is, as we have seen, twenty miles; his own rate of travel on this occasion he does not give, but a reference to his map makes the whole distance about sixty miles — an estimate which I cannot but believe him to have adopted quite deliberately in view of the explicit statement, with which he introduces the Aflaj to his readers. "That province," he says, "which in most maps is, I know not

[1] Against this estimate, however, I should quote the statement given by him in describing his progress from Haïl to Buraida (*vide* vol. i. p. 235): "Every day we made about twelve or fourteen hours' march, at a rate of about five miles per hour, or a little more—the ordinary pace of a riding camel"—this with a band of twenty-seven or twenty-eight persons, including merchants, women and children, and accompanied by a few beasts of burden alongside. The journey from Haïl to Buraida took nine days—the distance according to a calculation of only eight days' marching for only ten hours a day at the rate of five miles an hour being 400 miles. At an average rate of twenty miles a day, the distance would be 160 to 180 miles—the actual crow-fly distance being about 150 miles.

[2] The season was early November, and we know that the party rested during the noontide heat and at night, to say nothing of short halts for breakfast. Eight hours' marching a day seems, therefore, a reasonable allowance in the absence of any indication of haste.

why, thrown to a distance of two or three hundred miles from the 'Aared, is in reality contiguous and separates it from Wadi Dowasir." His map endeavours to show the three provinces in the relation to each other, which he so carefully notes in the text, and I can see no reason for supposing that it is not meant to be a commentary on the text in the matter of distances also. However that may be he entered the Aflaj province about midway on his journey, that is to say, at a point about thirty miles or one day's journey distant from Riyadh.

As I proceeded by easy stages towards the same goal, I began to experience ever-increasing difficulty in reconciling the account of my predecessor either with my own long delay in arriving at the borders of the Aflaj or with the position, some 150 miles south-west of Riyadh, assigned to Kharfa in Ritter's map[1] of Arabia, but I took comfort in a story, retailed to me by one of my companions, of a man, who, having prayed the *Jum'a* prayer[2] at Riyadh, arrived at Laila in time to lie with his wife on Saturday night. It was not till I arrived at the borders of the Aflaj plain and found that Kharfa was but a dozen miles or so distant from its first settlement that I began to realise that there was something seriously amiss with Palgrave's story, and my suspicions were further aroused by the failure of my guides to betray any knowledge of the villages of Safra and Meshallah.

My first essay at plotting out my route in the field led me to the conclusion that no route between Riyadh and Kharfa could be shorter than 140 miles[3] and to doubt whether Palgrave could have accomplished such a distance in two days. The case above quoted was against me, but it seemed to me incredible that Palgrave should have passed over such a feat without comment, and it was only later that I realised his own much more modest idea of the distance involved. Later, however, in preparing my paper

[1] Published in 1852, and reproduced in D. G. H. p. 170.

[2] The earliest hour at which he could have started would, therefore, be one o'clock P.M., between which and midnight on Saturday would be thirty-five hours—but hours of sustained and rapid riding.

[3] Official report above referred to.

for the Royal Geographical Society out of the still unexamined material of my notes and rough plottings of my routes, I thought it necessary, in making an attack on my predecessor's veracity, to revise my former views in the direction of greater caution and contented myself with a minimum distance of 110 miles [1] between Riyadh and Kharfa, while maintaining my general contention that he could not have covered, and did not cover, that distance in the space of two days. Relying as I did in this opinion on other factors no less important than that of the distance involved, I doubtless overstated the case in so far as it was based on this factor alone, but Mr. Hogarth went too far in the opposite direction when in the ensuing discussion he stated: [2] "Take Mr. Philby's main arguments. First of all, he says it was impossible for Palgrave to have done 110 camel miles in two days—that is, 55 miles a day—or, at least, that it was extremely unlikely he could do them in the time: 70 to 80 miles a day, however, is quite an ordinary speed upon camels ridden by people who have reason for riding fast, *e.g.* by the post or by a messenger taking an important despatch. Palgrave does not specify that he went particularly fast; but he was accompanied by only one man. He did the excursion for some particular reason, and I think we must take it not only to have been a perfectly possible feat, but also that he did ride fast, and did cover 55 miles each day. He says that at the end of the first day he was at the doors of Aflaj, which is a distance of 50 or 60 miles from Riyadh, and the next day very late at night he got down to the neighbourhood of Kharfah. Colonel Lawrence told me only three days ago that within the last autumn a man rode from Zilfi to Yambo [3] and back across Najd at a rate which works out at 130 miles a day. He used three camels, riding one for one-third of the way, changing that for another which he rode for another third, and then taking another for the remaining third. On the return journey he picked up the same camels at the same stages. That shows that such endurance is quite possible in the man. Palgrave, who had already ridden a great deal

[1] *J.R.G.S.*, March, 1920, p. 176. [2] *J.R.G.S.*, March, 1920, p. 188.
[3] Roughly 500 miles each way.

through Arabia, was probably a perfectly well-practised camel-rider."

I find it a little difficult to accept as fully authenticated the remarkable feat of endurance quoted by Mr. Hogarth. Though he quotes it on the authority of Colonel Lawrence, it can at best but rest eventually on Arab authority, and in such matters the Arab has a propensity for indulging in high flights of imagination and is not to be taken too literally. To the best of my knowledge there was no reliable witness at Zilfi in the autumn of 1918 to record the start and finish of that race, except myself, and I heard nothing of it though I was in Zilfi itself from October 5 to 7, and in its neighbourhood—in the Qasim—continuously from August 23 to October 4, of that same autumn. However that may be, it does not invalidate the general truth of Mr. Hogarth's contention that far greater feats of camel-riding than that called in question by me are by no means uncommon or impossible nor does the admission of this fact prejudice my contention that Palgrave neither travelled nor claimed to have travelled 110 miles in two days on the occasion of his alleged visit to the Aflaj. Since the reading of my paper before the Royal Geographical Society all the geographical material collected by me during my sojourn in Arabia has been collated and adjusted to my astronomically determined positions by the Society's experts with the result that Kharfa has receded to a crow-fly distance of about 170 miles from Riyadh, substantially justifying the position[1] assigned to it in Ritter's old map and largely increasing the difficulty of reliance on Palgrave's claim to have visited it. With regard to the question as to what is in ordinary circumstances a reasonable day's journey by camel, so many cases of extraordinary feats are on record or within the knowledge of those who have occasion to be interested in the matter, that I can do no more than state my own opinion that, if night-marching be excluded and the day's march be conducted with the deliberation customary to an Arab, who, unless seriously pressed, considers the comfort of his beast rather than his own, a rate of

[1] Except in the matter of direction, Kharfa being practically due south of Riyadh, and not south-west as shown on the map.

thirty miles [1] in a day may be considered very fair progress, and anything more than that distinctly good going—and uncomfortable withal.

The next point in my indictment against Palgrave arises out of his specific mention of the two villages of Safra and Meshallah and out of his account of the route he followed. On my way down to the Aflaj I followed a somewhat round-about route by way of Wadi Hanifa and the Kharj district to the head of the 'Ajaimi valley and thence across the Rajd uplands to the confines of the Aflaj plain, while on my return journey I found myself at Ghail not far distant from Kharfa and Laila, and striking thence over the outer slopes of Tuwaiq with my outward track parallel at no great distance on the right, and the high plateau of Tuwaiq hemming me in on the left, I almost touched my outward course again at the exit of the Ahmara gorge into the head of the 'Ajaimi valley and thence marched in as direct a line as possible, hugging the eastern fringe of the Hauta district, to rejoin the Wadi Hanifa at Haïr. Now it can scarcely be gainsaid that a traveller bound from Riyadh to the Aflaj must follow one of these two routes or some route intermediate between them,[2] where the lie of the land presents no serious obstacle to progress, and it is incredible that any one adopting any such route could have passed between the fertile settlements of Kharj on the one hand and the great oasis of Hauta on the other without noticing either. Yet not only does Palgrave from his own account appear to have achieved that feat, but he actually found and halted at two oasis-villages, Safra and Meshallah, the latter within the borders of the Aflaj, which have, we must believe, disappeared from the face of the earth within the space of half a century without leaving a trace or rumour of their former existence. My guides, some of them intimately acquainted with all this tract, had

[1] *I.e.* when accompanied by a reasonable amount of light baggage, kitchen utensils, etc.

[2] As Palgrave states that he crossed Wadi Hanifa it is unnecessary to consider what would have happened had he followed a route to eastward of my outward route. If, on the other hand, he had followed a route to westward of my return track he would have found himself blocked by the tremendous gorge of Majma', and would have had to circumvent it either by way of Hauta or Hariq, which he admittedly did not do.

never heard of them, and no conclusion is open to us except to aver that not only do they not exist at the present day, but never existed at all. Surely the creation of non-existent villages out of his own imagination is a serious offence in any one who claims to be an explorer, but Mr. Hogarth, referring to my comments on this matter, deprecated the serious view I had taken of it, "Mr. Philby," he said,[1] "lays stress upon the little that Palgrave noticed and on the inaccuracies of his account. I have already given you a partial explanation of that—he could not remember, when he came to write that journey out a year or more after his return to Europe, what he had seen by the way. I wonder whether Mr. Philby has ever tried to work out some other road of Palgrave's over which nobody doubts that he did travel. I have had to make that experiment. It was necessary once during the war to compile a report of a certain road between Buraida and Zilfi. I took Palgrave's account of that road among others, but I could never make head or tail of it. It would have been just as easy to maintain that Palgrave had never been to Buraida as to say he had never been down to Aflaj. He had no conscience about reports and his memory was extremely imperfect. He gives what is apparently considerable detail of the roads, and, as a matter of fact, except for the fact that he did go from point to point, all that comes between is very largely imagination." Surely never was a more damaging defence made of any accused person.

Now in making my attack on Palgrave in the matter of these fictitious villages I had put forward what had seemed to me, when first considering the problem, a plausible explanation of his aberration from the path of virtue in this particular instance. I assumed that no question could arise regarding the essential features of his adventure and narrative, and for the moment I was only concerned to show that in matters of detail his testimony could not always be accepted without cavil, or, in other words, that he was capable of embellishing his story as much with imaginary adventures as with imaginative detail. I was already beginning, as the result of careful re-reading of the *Travels*

[1] *J.R.G.S.*, March, 1920, pp. 188, 189.

in the light of my own experience, to question the justice of this general assumption regarding Palgrave's veracity, and Mr. Hogarth's remarks on the subject did not serve to allay my doubts, but of this aspect of the question and of Mr. Hogarth's challenge to me to apply the same methods of criticism to Palgrave's account of other roads, "over which no one doubts that he did travel," I shall have more to say in due course.

For the moment, therefore, I assumed that, much as the facts were against acceptance of his claim to have visited the Aflaj, there was no reason to doubt that he resided at Riyadh; and there I pictured him forgathered in his coffee-parlour with the man of the unfortunate name, Bedaa', the merchant from Najran, than whom none at the *Wahhabi* capital could have been better qualified to instruct his questioner on the mysteries of the south country. Now Bedaa', if ever such a man existed, had come to Riyadh on business, and he must have travelled by way of Wadi Dawasir and the Aflaj. From Kharfa, if we may suppose that he broke his journey there, he would naturally have travelled by the shortest and most direct route to his destination, and, being an Arab, he would certainly have travelled night and day, breaking his journey only for necessary refreshment and repose during the hot hours of the day. If he said he took two days—he probably said two nights—we may suppose that he started late in the afternoon of the first day, and, travelling all that night, drew rein for refreshment next morning in the down country of Insalah. Pursuing his journey, he would have struck into my own return route in the neighbourhood of the mouth of the Fara' channel and rested during the noontide hours on the bare slope of Tuwaiq, the *Safra* in fact, or, as we might say, the wilderness. Another rapid night march might well have brought him to Riyadh by noon on the third day. Such a performance, a typical proceeding for an Arab travelling alone and with a definite object, was very different from the feat with which Palgrave must be credited, if we believe him. More observant than Palgrave, he saw many villages and oases both in the Aflaj and possibly in Kharj or the Fara' valley, and described or spoke about them in

the rambling Arab way, but it was Palgrave who erred in spreading them broadcast over the country to give an air of verisimilitude to his story, and, unfortunately for him, the only names he could recall, "when he came to write that journey out," and one of them only in a mangled form, were those of his informers' halting-places in the desert—Safra, the wilderness, which he clothed with palms and habitations of men, and Insalah, which under the fanciful form of Meshallah he misplaced within the borders of the Aflaj as a flourishing oasis.

This seemed to me at the time at any rate a plausible explanation of his lapse, but it does not seem to me now that any explanation, which postulates unqualified admission of his claim to have resided at Riyadh, is in any way satisfactory, and I have only recently lighted upon a clue, which seems to establish beyond a doubt that Palgrave did not derive his knowledge of the village of Meshallah from a native of Najran. Whence he got the name I cannot say, but, though he was responsible for the spelling he adopted, it is interesting to note that he was not the first to show it on a map of Arabia. Ritter's map of that country, to which I have already referred, shows in approximately the same relation to Kharfa [1] as that given by Palgrave to Meshallah, a settlement named Mescheileh, which may without hesitation be identified with the little oasis of Wusaila, the first settlement of the Aflaj province, to which one comes from the north, and from which the palms of Kharfa, to say nothing of many other oases, are easily visible across the plain and within easy reach. On the whole it seems more reasonable to suppose that Palgrave got the name from Ritter's map or some other than that he got it from Bedaa' or his own observation. Of Safra the less said the better, though even here Ritter's map with less justification comes to the rescue with the record of a place of that name, which it makes the first stage [2] out from Riyadh in a south-westerly direction.

[1] The spacing of the names in Ritter's map was, of course, purely conventional, the names of villages and halting-places being derived from second-hand sources.

[2] This and the remaining stages on the route in question are obviously spaced out conventionally, and most of the names are impossible to identify.

So much for the two main points of my argument. I find it difficult to believe that even Palgrave could have described the track over the flat plain of the Aflaj from Wusaila to Kharfa as a gorge of some depth, or could have failed to observe the rich oases, like Laila, Saih, and others, which dot the plain. Moreover, at the time of which Palgrave wrote, Mubarraz in the Laila oasis, and not Kharfa, was the seat of the provincial governor.

But Palgrave's greatest offence against geography was a sin of omission for which it is impossible to forgive one who posed as an explorer. "Once for all," thus does he begin his *Travels*,[1] "let us attempt to acquire a fairly correct and comprehensive knowledge of the Arabian Peninsula. With its coasts we are already in great measure acquainted; several of its maritime provinces have been, if not thoroughly, at least sufficiently, explored; Yemen and Hejaz, Mecca and Medinah are no longer mysteries to us, nor are we wholly without information on the districts of Hadramaut and 'Oman. But of the interior of the vast region, of its plains and mountains, its tribes and cities, of its governments and institutions, of its inhabitants, their ways and customs, of their social condition, how far advanced in civilisation or sunk in barbarism, what do we as yet really know, save from accounts necessarily wanting in fulness and precision? It is time to fill up this blank in the map of Asia, and this, at whatever risks, we will now endeavour; either the land before us shall be our tomb, or we will traverse it in its fullest breadth, and know what it contains from shore to shore."

It is incredible that one, who set out with such high ambitions and whose observance of detail extended even to such matters as the difference in length of the shirts worn by the folk of different districts, should have visited the province of the Aflaj, without exception the most remarkable province of Inner Arabia, and failed to observe the feature, which distinguishes it from the rest and from which it derives its very name—the wonderful system of irrigation channels based on a series of deep reservoirs, one of which is of the dimensions of a lake. The fame of that lake had

[1] W. G. P. vol. i. pp. 1, 2.

reached Europe long before Palgrave set forth on his travels, and it was represented—in a greatly exaggerated form, it is true, but in reasonably correct relation to the oasis of Kharfa—in Ritter's map of Arabia. It was doubtless inserted in that map with much diffidence on second-hand evidence, and Palgrave's failure to confirm its existence confirmed European geographers in their doubts, with the result that the lake disappeared from our maps not to be restored thereto for half a century or more.

I have here set forth the grounds, on which I hold that Palgrave's claim to have travelled from Riyadh to Kharfa should be rejected as an impudent attempt at imposture. Apart from his bare statement to that effect, his account of that journey and of the country over which it lay contains no internal evidence whatever of his having made it, and much evidence to the contrary. I cannot believe that any one who had travelled over that route could have so completely succeeded in effacing from his memory all the impressions which must have crowded upon him during those few days; but the more solid points of my contention may be conveniently summarised as follows:

1. Kharfa is about 170 miles distant from Riyadh in a direct line, but Palgrave represents himself as having travelled between these two points in two days of ordinary riding.

2. He failed to notice on the way any of the features, which existed then as they do still, but made up for that omission by creating two non-existent villages out of his own imagination or adopting their names from some map accessible to him.

3. He failed to notice the many other oases of the Aflaj or the lake and other reservoirs and the irrigation channels, which constitute its outstanding features; and

4. Almost without exception the information gleaned by him at first or second hand with regard to the country between Riyadh and Kharfa, the Aflaj province, Wadi Dawasir, and the country beyond it, is at variance with the facts.

It will probably readily be admitted that, regarded as a contribution to European knowledge of the country south

of Riyadh, Palgrave's account of his southern excursion is worthless, but there will be many who, like Mr. Hogarth, will still hesitate to go to the extreme of condemning him as an impostor until further evidence is forthcoming regarding the true extent of his Arabian travels, and will ask why one, who had made sure of fame by his protracted wanderings in other parts of the country, "over which nobody doubts that he did travel," should have jeopardised his reputation in a parenthesis devoted to an account of what he at any rate regarded as a minor and quite unimportant excursion.

That question opens up a wide problem, on the consideration of which I should have preferred not to embark; yet it is essential that I should do so, lest through my failure to answer a question at once so reasonable and so pertinent, the particular case I set out to prove should break down on the principle, doubly applicable in the case of one who cannot defend himself, that innocence must be assumed until guilt is established. Let us therefore start out with the proposition that, however strong the evidence may be against him, Palgrave's claim to have visited the Aflaj must be admitted, unless it can be shown that he has imposed on his readers in respect of other portions of his travels than that which has hitherto been under consideration.

In spite of the fact that "all that comes between is very largely imagination," Mr. Hogarth remains firm in his faith that Palgrave "did go from point to point"; his faith is not shaken by his inability to "make head or tail" of Palgrave's account of the road between Buraida and Zilfi; he accepts his visit to those places as a matter of fact and declares, in the light of his own experience, that "it would have been just as easy to maintain that Palgrave had never been to Buraida as to say he had never been down to Aflaj." In his book he discusses the matter at greater length.[1] "An obvious alternative explanation," he says, "of his many exaggerations, omissions, and misstatements, which has found some favour with the 'Higher Critics,' is certainly wrong. Palgrave without doubt made the journey which he described. Of his successors in Nejd,

[1] D. G. H. p. 249.

none has expressed any misgiving as to the authenticity of his visit, and more than one has borne express testimony that the accuracy of his record on certain points is such that none but an eye-witness could have penned it. Thus the latest of all, Baron Nolde, mentions the calumny, only to refute it as an 'unberichtigt so doch häufig vorgebrachter Einwand.' An explorer of much greater authority, C. M. Doughty, in a letter to the present writer, implied that he had no doubt of his predecessor, and that he understood certain remarks made to himself in Haïl to refer probably to Palgrave. He adds: 'El Khennainy said to me in Aneyza something like this: How can you go about in such a lawless land calling yourself a Nasrany and Ingleysy? Such a one [name I cannot recall] did not so when he journeyed through the country.' Lastly, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt writes: 'I cannot doubt that Palgrave really made the journey narrated in his book. . . . I can bear testimony to his description of social life in Nejd as being a faithful picture of what I saw.' It need only be added that the correspondence of Palgrave's description of Nejdean oasis society with Doughty's is of the closest. And so let all doubt be dismissed."

I quote this passage in full to show the great weight of authority against me, but there are certain points in it which may be dealt with at the outset. It should be remembered in the first place that the northern limit of my own travels was Qusaiba in the Qasim, and that for this reason I am not concerned with that part of Palgrave's narrative which deals with his wanderings in the country north of that point. This fact makes Mr. Hogarth's array of witnesses less imposing than it might have been, for, of them, Blunt never got farther south than Haïl; Nolde, whose "power and will to observe what geographers desire were not great," [1] only travelled over Palgrave's tracks in these parts between Qusaiba and Buraida; while Doughty touched Palgrave's line of travel only at Buraida. There remain, however, unexplained the references to Palgrave, which Doughty thought he detected in the conversation of people he met at Haïl and 'Anaiza. To take the instance quoted above first,

[1] D. G. H. p. 255.

"El Khennainy" can scarcely have referred to Palgrave, who not only never visited 'Anaiza, but states explicitly that, though without unnecessary ostentation, he and his companion travelled in the guise of *Christians*[1] of Syria, but to Guarmani, who visited 'Anaiza in March 1864, posed as a *Muslim* and appears to have enjoyed the special favour of Zamil and other notables of the town. The other two references[2] to a predecessor occurred in the course of Doughty's conversations with people at Haïl; in the first that predecessor was expressly named 'Abdullah, whereas Palgrave's assumed name was, as he himself tells us,[3] "Seleem Abou-Mahmood-el-'Eys"; the second may or may not have referred to him, and, if it did, was far from complimentary: "*'Rajul saduk wellah*" ("A man to trust, by God!") exclaimed that old Sheykh [referring of course to Doughty]. "This is not like him who came hither, thou canst remember, Muhammad, in what year, but one that tells us all things plainly."

So far, therefore, as the country south of Haïl is concerned the weight of authority in favour of the unqualified acceptance of Palgrave's claim is far from overwhelming; but it may be argued that if Palgrave did as a matter of fact visit Jauf and Haïl, and described the society of those places with some approach to accuracy, though with exaggerations and misstatements, there is no reason why we should cavil at his own statement that he went farther south to the Qasim, to Riyadh, to the Hasa and to the Aflaj, even though we may find serious fault with his descriptions of those places. That argument is not without a flaw. The circumstances of Palgrave's visit to Arabia are wrapped in mystery, and so far as I have been able to ascertain, there

[1] *Vide* W. G. P. vol. i. p. 265: Summing up his remarks on the question of disguises, he says: "A Christian and an Englishman may well traverse Arabia and even Nejed without being ever obliged to compromise either his religion or his honour." And vol. i. p. 266: "the plan just indicated, the same which we ourselves followed, is assuredly the best plan." And vol. i. p. 267: "Once and once only did our title of Christians become a cause of accusation and a source of real danger." *Vide* also vol. ii. p. 119: Abdullah: "You are Christians, spies . . ." Palgrave: "Christians, be it so; but spies . . . as if we were not known . . . for quiet doctors."

[2] C. M. D. vol. i. pp. 589, 604.

[3] W. G. P. vol. i. p. 152.

is, apart from his own narrative, no direct evidence for the authenticity of any part of his journey or, for instance, of the unfortunate shipwreck that robbed him of his notes at its termination and threw him entirely upon the resources of his memory when, two years later, he set himself to write an account of his experiences. Mr. Hogarth [1] has, however, set forth the salient points of such independent evidence as there is. "Napoleon," for instance, after an unsuccessful attempt to prolong a French military occupation of Syria arising out of the Lebanon massacres of 1860, "hoped at that time either to establish an effective French occupation of Syria, or to secure the country for his client, the Egyptian Viceroy, in whose differences with the suzerain Ottoman power he was not unconcerned"; and again: "By 1862 the certainty that the Suez Canal would be made was increasing immensely the interest of France and Egypt in Arabia." Palgrave, summoned to Paris by Napoleon "on the morrow of the Damascene massacres . . . presented himself to the Emperor as a likely envoy to Arab societies"; and Palgrave himself gratefully acknowledged "that the necessary funds were furnished by the liberality of the present Emperor of the French." The position is summed up by Mr. Hogarth in three sentences: "Their mission was probably religious only inasmuch as the interests of the Jesuit College in the east were at this period bound up with the political fortunes of France." "It is much more probable that his main commission was to further some political plan." "It is necessary to make it clear that this explorer did not go to Arabia in the interests of science . . . but he did go in another interest which was bound to give him a certain bias."

It would seem from all this that there is very little doubt that Palgrave did penetrate into Desert Arabia, and did so in order to secure the sympathies of that country for the French Emperor in his designs on Syria and the Suez Canal region. Such a commission would certainly not necessitate extended wanderings through the *Wahhabi* country to the Persian Gulf, while the statement that the main object of his journey was the *Wahhabi* capital and that which

[1] D. G. H. pp. 245 ff.

lay beyond it, supported by a colourable record of his adventures therein, might well serve to divert public attention from the fact that the centre of his political activities was, as it must have been, Jabal Shammar and its capital. It is at any rate significant that neither his predecessor, Wallin, nor his successor, Guarmani, both of whom appear to have visited Arabia for reasons similar to his own, the one on behalf of the Viceroy of Egypt, and the other on behalf of the French Emperor himself, thought it worth while to extend his wanderings very far to the south of Jabal Shammar, though both of them travelled very extensively within the limits which they had prescribed for themselves.

That Palgrave could have achieved his political object in full without going farther south than Ibn Rashid's country can scarcely be disputed. If, therefore, the internal evidence of his account, apart from the intrinsic probabilities of the case, is sufficient to establish the contention that he was an eye-witness of the scenes he depicts in northern Najd, while the general tenor of his account of his travels in central and southern Najd is such that one hesitates to believe it to be the record of an eye-witness, there would seem to be a plausible case for calling in question the authenticity of at any rate that part of his journey which was not necessary to the fulfilment of his political mission. I shall now examine in such detail as may be necessary his account of his experiences in the *Wahhabi* country, from the moment he entered it at the border oasis of Qusaiba in the north to the time when he set sail from the Hasa coast, following for convenience the stages of his journey.

Approaching the borders of the Qasim from the northward he treats his readers to a discourse on the slope of the peninsular surface. "Long-continued years of travelling . . . do at last empower the eye, and indeed all the senses, to measure height and distance, direction and level, with tolerable accuracy, even in the want of the instruments that modern science supplies to aid and rectify our rougher calculations. These instruments are indeed absolutely requisite wherever any pretension is made to minute precision and mathematical detail." He assures us, neverthe-

less, that his statements "may be safely relied on for a basis and first step to the verification and reform of the Arabian map," and states that the watershed or main ridge of Arabia "bears from N.N.W. to S.S.E. between 45° and 46° longitude Greenwich, and from 29° to 24° latitude north." "On each side of this ridge, and to the south also Arabia slopes down coastwards to the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean." I quote these passages only to remark once and for all that Palgrave's conceptions of the physical geography of Central Arabia bear not the slightest relation to the facts and are altogether incomprehensible, coming as they do from one who claimed to have seen so much of the country.

Already, soon after leaving Faid, he descries at times "far off to the east a few faint blue peaks, the extreme offsets of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ," and in due course he reaches Qusaiba, an oasis which extends in a long thin line of palms in a salty bottom at the foot of a perpendicular cliff of the calcareous plateau. "The little hill," he says, "up whose eastern side the houses are built, is in other parts so thickly covered with ithel and palm as to be almost picturesque."

Through the next two stages of his journey I need not follow him as the route I followed from Buraida to Qusaiba left the oases of Quwara and 'Uyun out of sight beyond the ridge to westward. At the first named he found "the innumerable overgrown dogs[1] of the village . . . certainly the most impudent and annoying that it was ever my bad luck to encounter," and lost a skin full of excellent Haïl dates, which as a precaution he used as a pillow, through their depredations. Soon after leaving this spot the party "came[2] to a sudden dip in the land-level and the extent of Southern Ḳaseem burst on our view. . . . Before us to the utmost horizon stretched an immense plain, studded with towns and villages, towers and groves. . . . The average breadth of this populous district is about sixty miles, its length twice as much, or more; it lies full two hundred feet below the level of the uplands, which here break off like a wall and leave the lower ground to stretch uninterrupted far away to the long transverse chain of Ṭoweyḳ that bounds

[1] W. G. P. vol. i. p. 238. [2] W. G. P. vol. i. pp. 238, 239 and 250.

it to the south and separates it from the high road leading from Nejed to Mecca . . . at a few miles' distance we saw the thick palm-groves of 'Eyoon, and what little of its towers and citadel the dense foliage permitted to the eye. Far off on our right, that is, to the west a large dark patch marked . . . the town of Rass; other villages and hamlets too were thickly scattered over the landscape." Is this indeed the testimony of an eye-witness of that desolate scene, a far-flung wilderness with nothing far and wide to break its monotony except a single oasis settlement—for that is all that he could have seen from that point or anywhere in its neighbourhood—the village of 'Uyun ?[1]

It may be that his memory played him false, but I have never ceased to regret that, owing to the activities of Ibn Rashid, nothing would induce my companions to diverge from our course that I might see 'Uyun, for there I had in mind to test Palgrave's veracity in a manner which would have left little room for doubt. It was not merely palms and houses he saw at 'Uyun. "But immediately before us stood a more remarkable monument, one that fixed the attention and wonder even of our Arab companions themselves."

Leachman,[2] who alone, I believe, of Europeans since Palgrave's time has visited the spot, failed to notice that monument, but his mere silence is not sufficiently convincing evidence that it does not exist and for the time being judgment must be reserved on this particular point. "We saw before us," says Palgrave, "several huge stones, like enormous boulders, placed endways perpendicularly on the soil, while some of them yet upheld similar masses laid transversely over their summit. They were arranged in a curve, once forming part, it would appear, of a large circle, and many other like fragments lay rolled on the ground at a moderate distance; the number of those still upright was, to speak by memory, eight or nine. Two,

[1] I did not see this oasis myself.

[2] It has since come to my notice that Hüber, an explorer of exceptional capacity and a most careful observer, also visited this oasis and failed to notice the existence of the wonderful phenomenon here referred to. His silence is to my mind convincing evidence that it does not exist.

at about ten or twelve feet apart one from the other, and resembling huge gate posts, yet bore their horizontal lintel, a long block laid across them ; a few were deprived of their upper traverse, the rest supported each its head-piece, in defiance of time and of the more destructive efforts of man. So nicely balanced did one of these cross-bars appear, that in hope it might prove a rocking-stone, I guided my camel right under it and then stretching up my riding-stick at arm's length could just manage to touch and push it, but it did not stir. Meanwhile the respective heights of camel, rider, and stick . . . would place the stone . . . full fifteen feet from the ground." My companions admitted complete ignorance of the existence of this Arabian " Stonehenge," but their admission serves us little more than Leachman's silence, both serving equally to raise doubts which cannot, in the present state of our knowledge, be resolved. It will, however, be admitted that the statement of its existence cannot be attributed in any way to the treachery of a faulty memory, and that if it is found not to exist, the probabilities are that Palgrave never saw it and never saw 'Uyun ; if, on the other hand, its existence can be established, there is every reason to believe that he did visit the locality and in all probability at least Buraida as well. And if that much is admitted in spite of his wildly fanciful description of the scene that lay before him, we must discard the internal evidence of his descriptions of the *Wahhabi* country as the test of his general veracity. A great deal, therefore, hangs on the question whether the monoliths of 'Uyun exist or not, and that question must for the present be left open.

At 'Uyun he is entertained to dinner and he treats his readers to a rambling discourse on Arabian botany and the evils of assuming ineffective disguises in *Muslim* lands. His botany is wild, but it is unnecessary to follow him here in detail ; suffice it to say that his estimate of six feet as the *maximum* depth of the wells in the Qasim is not justified by the facts, nor his statement that this province exports dates to the Yaman and the Hijaz. The next stage in his journey is the non-existent oasis of Ghat, whose gardens and fields it took him, nevertheless, a full hour to pass. Finally, having sighted Buraida, and at a league's distance

therefrom, he breaks his journey to spend the evening at Duwaira, another creation of his own imagination.

At last he reaches Buraida on the 17th September, 1862, and there spends a fortnight; but what with his discursive comments on things in general, and the tents and tabernacles of an imposing Indo-Persian pilgrim train in particular, which chanced to have arrived and encamped at the city a few days before, and with his rich display of the great knowledge he undoubtedly possessed of the details of Arab town life—for was he not long resident at Damascus?[1]—he exposes himself to little criticism in his account of his sojourn there and that only in matters of detail. Of the minarets and other features, which differentiate the non-*Wahhabi* from the *Wahhabi*, he might well be able to speak at second hand without serious risk, but he treads on thin ice when he says: "Sometimes there is a whole string of these beasts [camels], the head-rope of each tied to the crupper of his precursor, very uncomfortable passengers when met with at a narrow turning." The practice of connecting the animals of a caravan in this manner, common as it is in India, is certainly not prevalent in Desert Arabia, and the only occasion I met with it during my sojourn in the country was on the road between Taïf and Mecca in the Hijaz. He finds the rock salt here "of remarkable purity and whiteness," whereas the product of the saltpans of the Qasim is always of a dirty pinkish hue. He ascends the *Ithil*-clad sand-ridge bordering the city and finds, looking south-west, "the whole country between is jotted over with islets of cultivation amid the sands, and far off long lines of denser shade indicate whereabouts 'Oneyzah itself is situated." In reality one looks out on an endless waste of high sand-ridges receding into the distance, and effectually precluding all possibility of seeing 'Anaiza or even the palm-groves of Wadi Rima on the hither side of it. As an ex-Indian officer he is interested in the military operations then being directed by the *Wahhabis* against 'Anaiza; the *Wahhabi* army has fallen in the interval from its high standard of military efficiency at any rate in one respect, for he noticed that "their fire-

[1] There he must have been acquainted with countless natives both of Buraida and 'Anaiza.

locks stood arranged in pyramids, much like our own manner of piling arms, before and between the lines."

Similar lapses might be multiplied without number, but he becomes more vulnerable when he takes advantage of his protracted stay to indulge in daily excursions [1] into the surrounding country "the better to study rural life in Ḳaseem." These excursions have a distinct flavour of his visit to the Aflaj, his objectives in the two cases he mentions, specifically being 'Asḳha and Muḍneb. The first is either non-existent or intended for Misqa', many days' journey distant from his starting-point, while Mudhnib, besides being well beyond the scope of an ordinary day's outing, lies in the direct line of march between Buraida and Shaqra, which Palgrave expressly tells us he avoided on resuming his southward march. "Two roads lay before us," [2] he says, "the shorter, and for that reason the more frequented of the two, led south-east by east through Woshem and its capital Shaḳ̀ra, and thence up [3] Wadi Haneefah to Riaḍ. But this track passed through a district often visited at the present moment by the troops of 'Oneyzah and their allies, and hence our companions, not over-courageous for the most, were afraid to follow it." In this passage he comes very near to giving himself the lie direct, for, surely if only a few days previously he had twice traversed the earlier, and therefore more dangerous part of the same route, there was no reason to shrink from it on this occasion. He obviously did not know that Mudhnib lay on this route, and if he was capable of inventing his excursion to that locality, there is no obvious reason why he should not have invented other adventures including the expedition to the Aflaj.

Of his progress between Buraida and Zilfi the less said the better; Mr. Hogarth confesses that he could not make head or tail of it. Nevertheless in his account of this stage of his journey Palgrave ventures on a great deal more detail than in that of his Aflaj excursion; he gives roughly a record

[1] W. G. P. vol. i. p. 314. [2] W. G. P. vol. i. p. 324.

[3] It is important to note that Palgrave consistently speaks of Wadi Hanifa as flowing from south to north, whereas, of course, its direction is exactly the reverse—an incredible mistake for an eye-witness of the *Wadi* between 'Ayaina and Riyadh to make.

of his marches and halts, showing that he took about thirty hours of actual marching to cover a distance of about sixty miles—a performance which compares but poorly with his ride to Kharfa, 170 miles in two days from start to finish, without any night-riding. His halts were again made at non-existent oases—Roweydah and Wasit. No wonder that his account defied the efforts of Mr. Hogarth to correlate it with facts known from other sources.

And yet Palgrave has the impudence to warn his readers of the pitfalls, into which the unwary may plunge in their efforts to obtain geographical information from the Arabs. "Let me remark here," [1] he says, "that Europeans who visit or describe the East should be on their guard against taking in a strict and literal sense the vague phrases employed by most Arabs, but above all by Egyptians and Syrians, when speaking of a stranger country and people; the frequent use of synonyms and homonyms is also a common source of mistake to foreign investigators. It is only by questioning many individuals, and that at separate times and places, and then leisurely comparing one's notes of the information thus obtained, that anything like accuracy can be reached even on the most leading topics, and then, too, it is best to bring one's own eyes and ears to bear on the spot or object in question if possible. . . . No Nejdean, great or small, would be over anxious to give a European too exact a notion of his native country. . . ."

From Zilfi onwards to Sadus at the brink of the Wadi Hanifa channel I cannot myself criticise Palgrave's narrative with the confidence of an eye-witness; but there are certain points in it which give one food for thought. His estimate of one to two thousand feet for the height of the Tuwaiq plateau "above the surrounding level of the peninsula" is wrong, but less extravagant than his statement that the Tuwaiq watershed "lies on the eastern, not on the western side," a fanciful conception, which he develops in detail. "The extreme verge [of Tuwaiq] is almost always abrupt, and takes a bold rise of about five or six hundred feet sheer in chalky cliffs from the adjoining plain. Then succeeds a tableland, various in extent, and nearly level throughout;

[1] W. G. P. vol. i. p. 337.

then another step of three or four hundred feet, followed by a second and higher tableland ; and occasionally a third and yet loftier plateau crowns the second." He crowns his caricature of the features of the Tuwaiq plateau by jeering at " the geographers who kindly supply Arabia, especially on its eastern side, with rivers going from Ḍerey'eeyah or elsewhere to the sea . . . for Wadi Aftan, often marked out in maps for a stream, we shall have the pleasure of tracking it in its whole length before long, and shall then better see what it really is." [1] But we need not be unduly pained by jeers emanating from one who makes Wadi Hanifa run backward and accomplishes the astonishing feat of tracking in its whole length the mythical and, needless to say, non-existent valley of Wadi Aftan.

At Ghat he found the wells " so copiously supplied even at this the very driest season of the year, that their overflow sufficed to fill a large reservoir from which ran on all sides rivulets . . ." and ascending the gorge he found himself in the shade of forest trees, including " somewhat to my surprise " the plane. " Snakes," too, he adds, " in Nejed are no less rare than in Ireland or Malta " ; and in this connection he ridicules a romance [2] by M. Lamartine, whose hero discovers a whole thicket full of their sloughs . . . a sort of serpents' cloak-room, I suppose. Happy the travellers who possess so rich and so inventive an imagination !

At length he reaches the oasis of Sadus, scarcely a mile distant from the edge of Wadi Hanifa, which runs hence unbroken in a south-easterly direction by way of 'Ayaina Jubaila and Malqa to Dara'iyya and thence to Riyadh itself, but not only does it take him the best part of a long day's march to reach the edge of the *Wadi*, which he finds going up before him in a south-westerly direction, but for the rest of his journey he leaves us to make head or tail, as best we may, of an account which bears but little relation to the facts. His mention of 'Ayaina, Malqa and Dara'iyya, the first and last, as he wrongly says, being in different branches of the valley, might serve to disarm our criticism, but he courts it by naming Jubaila, the scene of a famous early Islamic victory, Rowḍah.

[1] W. G. P. vol. i. p. 339.

[2] *Journal of Fath-Allah Sey'yir.*

At Riyadh, the climax of his great adventure, which he reached on the 13th October, 1862, and left on the 24th November after a sojourn of forty-two days, he realises the necessity of taking his readers into his confidence. "Before I enter," he says, "on the details of the fifty days that followed in this strange town . . . I must draw somewhat largely on the stock of confidence and belief which I trust that my readers kindly afford me as an Englishman, though a traveller. . . . My object is to give as correct, indeed as complete an idea as may be of a land, a government, etc. . . ." As a matter of fact his theme, the story of strange, wonderful, and dangerous adventures at the *Wahhabi* court, does not lend itself to a minute dissection as do his accounts of the stages by which he reached their scene. He is at home, as I have already remarked, in dealing with Arab town life and the life of Riyadh, apart from being more puritanical, does not differ very widely from that of Buraida and Haïl. As for his adventures they may well have occurred if ever he sojourned at Riyadh, and certainly could not have befallen him if he never was there. He errs, and errs frequently, as we might expect, in points of detail, but it would be tedious to examine his account of his experiences at Riyadh with the same minuteness as elsewhere. We may question the justice of his innuendoes[1] directed against *Wahhabi* morality, and reject as nonsense the statement that "wild boars and pigs are frequent in the mountain [of Tuwaiq]." We may question too whether it was at Riyadh that "for the first time in Arabia he heard the names or found the traces" of the Nabathaeans and the Himyarites, and whether, being a Christian, he enjoyed as free an access to the *Wahhabi* mosques as he would have us believe.

A long and learned dissertation on the diseases prevalent

[1] *E.g.* in vol. ii. p. 24 he says: "Profligacy of all kinds, even such as language refuses to name, is rifer here than in Damascus and Ṣeyda themselves, and the comparative decency of most other Arab towns sets off the blackness of Riad in stronger and stranger contrast." This statement is a complete libel, and readers of Burton will probably accept my statement that sodomy, fornication and adultery are practically unknown in Central Arabia. I have occasionally heard of *Badawin*, but only *Badawin*—and that rarely—indulging in unnatural vice with animals and plants.

in Arabia reminds us, in the middle of his account of life at Riyadh, that Palgrave was first and foremost a doctor, and that in the midst of, or in spite of, his other preoccupations and adventures, he devoted sufficient time to the practice of his profession to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of all that Arabia has to teach a medical man. I have not the necessary technical knowledge to criticise his imposing list of some fifty principal maladies, across which he came in the course of his two and a half months' practice at Haïl and Riyadh. It is fair perhaps to assume that in compiling this record from memory he was not entirely forgetful of the *Badawin* cases he had doubtless treated at Damascus, but his memory of the cases met with in Central Arabia itself seems to have played him false in one respect. "A disease which I need not name," he blushes as he writes the words, "is frightfully common. Like all other nations, Arabs assign it a foreign origin." I can venture on the assertion that venereal diseases are exceedingly rare in the *Wáhhabi* country, the cases known being generally, if not invariably, traceable to infection of visitors to such places as Basra, Damascus, Cairo, Mecca and Madina.

His discourse on Arab horses need not detain us, nor the thrilling scenes with 'Abdullah, the heir-apparent to the *Wahhabi* throne, which culminated in a hairbreadth escape from the city, and three days' concealment in its neighbourhood until all should be ready for the final march to the Hasa and the shores of the Persian Gulf, in the course of which he gives us perhaps the most convincing evidence of his untrustworthiness.

It was the 24th November, 1862. The winter was now setting in and abundant rain had fallen, but "none of the streams showed any disposition to reach the sea, nor indeed could they, for this part of Nejed is entirely hemmed in to the east by the Ṭoweyḳ range." This is certainly an auspicious opening for a journey down the south-eastward trending valley of Wadi Hanifa, which not only would reach the sea, if it had a sufficient volume of water, but has the whole mass of the Tuwaiq plateau not on the east but the west. But in this section of the journey Palgrave ties himself up in impossible knots. It took him over four hours

to reach Manfuha, which actually lies in the same basin as Riyadh and may be reached in half an hour's easy stroll. Beyond Manfuha he finds himself not in Wadi Hanifa as he should have done but in Wadi Sulaiy; farther east than this the Hanifa valley does not go, "and the low cross-range which we had just traversed forms a geographical and territorial demarcation." In other words it is in this "cross-range" that he places the source of Wadi Hanifa, making it, as I have already noted, run exactly in the opposite direction to that which it does follow. The cross-range has, of course, no existence, and Wadi Hanifa rising at the western extremity of the Tuwaiq plateau runs down through it and along its eastern fringe to the Kharj district and thence to the Sahaba drainage-channel.

Wadi Sulaiy, in which he found "none but small and unimportant villages" whereas there are none at all, he also makes run backwards from an imaginary source in an equally imaginary Hariq district in a northerly direction, whereas it rises north of Riyadh and joins Wadi Hanifa short of the Kharj district.

These mistakes he makes in spite of the fact that he took advantage of his days of enforced inactivity to climb "the high chalky cliffs of Ṭoweyḳ on its eastern side" expressly "to acquire a clearer idea of the land." From that lofty eminence he gained a distant glimpse of the "blue sierra of Ḥareeḳ in the far south," of which, to anticipate matters, later in his journey, having passed Sulaimiyya, he caught "a magnificent southward view" being now "opposite to it though separated from it by a streak of desert. Its hills, seemingly granite . . . lie east and west in a ragged and isolated chain, which was apparently sixty miles or more in length. . . . It was curious also to see how suddenly, almost abruptly, Djebel Ṭoweyḳ ended in the desert, going down in a rapid series of precipitous steps, the last of which plunges sheer into the waste of sand." All this is indeed fancy run riot; not a word of it has any ponderable relation to the facts.

At length on the 28th November, the period of hiding comes to an end and Palgrave makes up for the long time spent in reaching Manfuha when fleeing for his life by an

exceedingly rapid transit, though now secure from pursuit and accompanied by a fair-sized caravan, to Sulaimiyya in Kharj, which he reached on the first day, though he does not realise the necessity of explaining how it came about that a caravan bound for the Hasa had chosen this long detour from the ordinary highway to that province. His next stage, the wells of Laḳey'yat, appears to be non-existent, and resuming its march on the following morning the party lost its way in a "thick blanket of mist fitter for Surrey than for Arabia, so dense was the milky fog." At length they "stood on the last and here the highest ledge of Ṭoweyḳ, that long chalky wall which bounds and backs up Nejed on the east." Then they descended to the lower level of the eastern desert, where they found more wells, apparently non-existent ones, called Oweysiṭ.

On they went into the night, when the character of the desert surface changed by slow degrees to sand. "It[1] was the great Dahna, or 'Red Desert,' the bugbear of even the wandering Bedouin, and never traversed by ordinary wayfarers without an apprehension which has too often been justified by fatal incidents. So light are the sands, so capricious the breezes that shape and reshape them daily into unstable hills and valleys, that no trace of preceding travellers remains to those who follow; while intense heat and glaring light reflected on all sides combine with drought and weariness to confuse and bewilder the adventurer, till he loses his compass and wanders up and down at random amid a waste solitude that soon becomes his grave. Many have thus perished; even whole caravans have been known to disappear in the Dahna without a vestige." Can this indeed be the description of one, who has himself crossed that barrier of sand and crossed it by night with the stars to guide his course? For many months of every year in the rainy season these wide sand-belts of Arabia are the home of the tenting *Badawin* and their flocks and herds; they contain the whole secret[2] of nomad life, for nowhere are the pastures richer than in their folds, and without them the pastoral life of the Arabs would be impossible. The

[1] W. G. P. vol. ii. pp. 130, 131.

[2] Both Doughty and Blunt have borne sufficient witness to this fact.

crossing of them has terrors for no man. Yet Palgrave and his guides contrived to lose their way and he attributes the fact that they found it again to the exercise by his guardian-angel and guide, Aboo-'Eysa, of "one of the latent powers of human nature, only to be brought out by circumstance and long exercise."

Emerging from the waste of sand the party now struck out across the Summan steppe-desert, where Palgrave now and again stumbles, but not very badly until he gets to the other side of Wadi Faruq and begins "to thread the coast-range of Hasa, for here, too, the desert is separated from the sea by that barren and rugged line of hills which passes round the entire, or almost entire, circumference of Arabia. . . . Opposite Wadi Farook the hills attain, after my very rough observations, about fourteeen hundred feet above the sea-level, and about four hundred feet above the desert on the west, which would thus be itself about a thousand feet higher than the coast." The last remark is approximately correct but the rest is nonsense, as also the statement that the main components of the "mountains of Hasa" are "granite and sandstone with occasional quartz and basalt." In point of fact there extends from the Dahana on the west to the eastern sea-coast a vast limestone desert sloping down by the easiest of gradients with nothing but occasional low hummocks and ridges to vary its barren monotony, but we are now at the threshold of the Hasa and I must quote from Mr. Hogarth's book to prepare the way for my criticisms of Palgrave's account of the province, where he spent the most pleasant fortnight of all his sojourn in Arabia.

"The[1] disguised Jesuit," he says, "exulting in his escape from Puritan Nejd, had more sympathy and more leisure to spare for Hasa than his predecessor;[2] and his narrative, nowhere more full and vivid, shows him at no pains to conceal a semi-oriental leaning towards a people whose sole effective rule of life was hedonism. . . . In more serious vein withal Palgrave gives detailed and admirable descriptions of both the towns and the oasis about them, with

[1] D. G. H. pp. 235 ff.

[2] Captain G. Forster Sadlier, who crossed Arabia in 1818.

which the little recorded by his predecessor Sadlier and his successors, Pelly and Zwemer, uniformly agrees. The last named . . . found the 'Syrian's' plan of Hofuf quite accurate enough after thirty years. . . . On the details of life . . . he speaks with a note of intimacy rarely attained by a European in the East. In much of southern Nejd we must use Palgrave as our authority because there is no other; in Hasa we use him in preference to all others. Were it not for him we should know so ill the character of the land and its people that its previous and subsequent history would be barely intelligible."

All this is high praise indeed, and coming as it does from Mr. Hogarth, should give us pause before entering into controversy with Palgrave on ground, as it were, of his own choosing. But how much of this encomium is really justified if we look at Palgrave's account naked and stripped of its rich covering of idle verbiage? Mr. Hogarth adduces in support of that encomium "the little recorded" by three other European visitors to the province. Sadlier recorded of the Hasa that "it had lakes and springs but no river," and regarding Hufuf, "the height of its mud walls and the tale of its fighting men"—scanty material, it must be admitted, to compare with his successor's full and detailed account. Neither Pelly nor Zwemer "added materially" to Palgrave's account, but in his remarks about the plan [1] of Hufuf the latter showed himself to be a somewhat careless observer, and his statement calls for a word or two of explanation. The "Syrian's" plan shows Hufuf as a roughly oblong-shaped city with the Kut or citadel quarter occupying a space at the top left-hand corner within the circuit wall; a question arises as to the orientation of this plan, on which a proper examination of it depends, but on this point Palgrave leaves us in no doubt. Approaching Hufuf he passed through the "hovels of Ghoweyr" noting that the capital lay "full fifteen miles" to the north-east of them; the track, which he followed, is shown accordingly as approaching the city from the south, and he explicitly states that he entered the latter by the southern gate. The orientation of the plan is therefore due north and south, as

[1] W. G. P. vol. ii. p. 141.

one would expect, and the Kut occupies the north-western corner of the city; yet he states in the text that "the Kot lies on its north-east." This extraordinary discrepancy escaped the attention of Zwemer, who apparently did not think it worth while to consider how the city really lay. I regret that I did not myself take the trouble to plot out the relative positions of the various parts of the city, but it would seem to me—and here I speak from memory—that the Kut occupies the north-western corner of the periphery; at any rate I approached Hufuf from the direction of E. 10° N.[1] and entered it by a gate situated roughly between the figures 11 and 12 at the top right-hand corner of Palgrave's plan. His plans of the cities of Arabia—the product, be it noted, of memory alone—leave a good deal to be desired, but I have already sufficiently discussed[2] his sketch of Riyadh, which bears a strong family resemblance to that of Haïl, though the latter has a less pronounced indentation of the oblong and that on the west not on the east.

The array of authority in support of the acceptance of Palgrave's account of the Hasa is therefore not very formidable and I turn to that account itself for a justification of Mr. Hogarth's praise. What has he to tell us then? We left him threading the coast-range of Hasa. "As[3] darkness closed around we reached the farthermost heights. . . . Hence we overlooked the plains of Hasa, but could distinguish nothing through the deceptive rays of the rising moon . . . we wandered on, now up, now down, over pass and crag, till a long corkscrew descent down the precipitous sea-side of the mountain for a thousand feet or near it, placed us fairly upon the low-level of Hasa." Scorning the temptation to repose in "the neighbouring hovels of Ghoweyr at the foot of the pass, or the village of Sha'abah, about five miles distant on our right," they pushed on to Hufuf. Of the city he gives us much excellent detail not without some bad errors of commission and omission, but

[1] The photograph facing p. 22, Vol. I., was taken looking about 10° south of west; the minaret of the Ibrahim Pasha mosque is in the Kut quarter which is thus seen to occupy the farther or western part of the city towards the north.

[2] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 70.

[3] W. G. P. vol. ii. p. 137.

he is at his best in describing the surrounding country, which he visits riding on "donkeys equipped with side-saddles" for "side-saddles are the fashion of Hasa for all donkey-riders, men or women indifferently."

"Turning[1] westward," he says, "we have before us a multitude of watercourses . . . and a vegetation of that semi-Indian type peculiar to this part of Arabia. . . . The mountain-chain extends for at least a hundred miles farther north. . . . So let us turn aside into that grassy plantation, where half-a-dozen buffaloes are cooling their ugly hides in a pool, and drink a little from the source that supplies it. When behold! the water is warm, almost hot. Do not be surprised, all the fountain sources and wells of Hasa are so, more or less, and in some, one can hardly bear to plunge one's hand. . . . The products of Hasa are many and various; the monotony of Arab vegetation, its eternal palm and ithel, ithel and palm, are here varied by new foliage . . . the papay, too, so well known in the more easterly peninsula,[2] appears, though seldom, and stunted in growth, along with other trees[3] common on the coast from Cutch to Bombay. . . . Indigo is here cultivated though not sufficiently for the demands of commerce . . . and the sugar-cane is often planted, though not, I believe, for the extraction of the sugar . . . almost all legumina and cerealia, barley excepted (at least I neither saw nor heard of any), cover the plain." Mark the master-note of intimacy, no barley in this earthly paradise.

Such in skeleton is Palgrave's account of the Hasa; but how does it compare with the facts? Unfortunately for Palgrave the coast-range of the Hasa has vanished from the scene, and with it the long corkscrew descent down the precipitous side of the mountains to the plains and the villages and hamlets nestling against the mountain-side. Gone, too, are most of the many and various products of the province—but not in vain, for barley grows profusely

[1] W. G. P. vol. ii. pp. 153 ff.

[2] *I.e.* India.

[3] Of these he promises a catalogue in a following chapter, giving it in his description of the Batina coast (vol. ii. p. 327). It includes mangoes, cocoa-nuts, betel-palms, the Jack-fruit, the Jamblu, coffee, yams, nuts, apples, etc., but he does not expressly state which of these he found also in the Hasa; none of them occur there.

where papay and sugar-cane and indigo grow no more. The fountain sources no longer scald the unwary hand for now they are no more than lukewarm, cool or cold; and last, but saddest of all, the buffalo no longer wallows in the miry pools for the buffalo is extinct. And Palgrave cannot plead a slip of the pen in his mention of these animals, for in two earlier passages of his narrative he correctly notes their non-existence in the Qasim and in Central Arabia.[1]

But, bad as it is, this is not all. If there is one point rather than another on which Palgrave may be expected to speak with unerring precision, or one aspect rather than another of Arabian life which we may expect him to examine in the minutest detail, it is surely that *Wahhabi* religion, against which he harboured so wholesome a prejudice and of whose manifestations he was always so acutely aware. Yet in his description of the Kut quarter he says: "Here,[2] too, is the model orthodox Mesjid, where all is done after the most correct Wahhabi fashion; here abide the Metowwaa's and Zëlators sent hither from Riad." Can he really have seen with his own eyes the graceful minaret and splendid dome of the great mosque of Ibrahim Pasha, the most beautiful architectural feature in all Central and Eastern Arabia, and the most pre-eminently non-*Wahhabi* monument of a city, on whose generally non-*Wahhabi* character he lays such stress in the same passage.

From Hufuf Palgrave in due course passed out of Arabia by a route which I did not traverse, and here I take leave of him, leaving those who are interested to pass judgment on the evidence before them. I set out to prove that Palgrave never travelled from Riyadh to Kharfa, and it has been answered that it would be just as easy to maintain that he had never been to Buraida. So be it; the wider arena is not of my choosing, but—and for the most part I have let him tell his own story again in his own words—is there not good reason to reconsider the verdict passed by Mr. Hogarth on the "obvious alternative explanation" of his many exaggerations, omissions and misstatements"? The considerations on which he based that verdict no longer seem to

[1] W. G. P. vol. i. pp. 315 and 451.
[2] W. G. P. vol. ii. p. 150.

hold good, but though "we may not hope to read the secrets of either the Jesuit College or the Tuileries," we are free to wonder, not whether Palgrave made a flying excursion to the Aflaj, but how much he really did see of Inner Arabia.

If it can be proved beyond a doubt that he did visit Buraida, Riyadh and the Hasa, we may well throw in the mere trifle of the Aflaj excursion with the rest, but we can at least plead no obligation to accept his word—the word of "an Englishman, though a traveller"—for the extent of his achievement and call for more satisfactory *data*, on which to form a judgment, than those contained in the two volumes of his narrative.

Palgrave was coldly [1] received by his countrymen on his return from this remarkable journey, and his views on Arabian hydrography were called in question by men of science, but such was the state of our knowledge of Arabia in those days, he scored an easy, but entirely undeserved, victory in a controversy with G. P. Badger on this point. It is strange that in those days no effort was apparently made to secure independent evidence of that which befell Palgrave, for instance between the time of his leaving Arabia and that of his return to Damascus. It is too late to collect such evidence now, unless it be from the archives of the Jesuit College in Syria, but the publication of my paper, together with Mr. Hogarth's remarks in the *Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society, has elicited evidence of the fact that at any rate one British officer,[2] who served at Masqat in the seventies of last century and did great service to Arabian geography, was not less sceptical than myself in regard to Palgrave's visit to 'Uman.

That evidence I give in full in the words of Sir William Haggard, as he gave it at a meeting [3] of the Royal Geographical Society in the course of a discussion after the reading of my second paper on Arabia. "I was unfortunately unable," he said, "to be present at the last lecture given by Mr. Philby, but I read it with great interest, and I saw in it some remarks about the possibility of Mr. Palgrave's inaccuracy. It is a very important thing that that should

[1] D. G. H. p. 306.
[2] The late Colonel S. B. Miles.
[3] May 3, 1920; *vide J.R.G.S.*, December, 1920, p. 466.

be settled one way or another, and perhaps the few words I say now may go towards that settlement a little. In the course of my life it has been my lot to come across Mr. Palgrave several times. I met him when he was a Jesuit Father and was at a monastery which I visited with my father on the Rhine, and I remember, as a boy, thinking that his conversation was very light for a Jesuit Father, a society which I had always thought was composed of serious persons. It was borne in upon me in another way later on that the idea I had formed of him in early days might be correct. I went up the Persian Gulf over forty years ago, having in the interval read his book on Arabia (which, by the way, he told me and my father he was really writing at the monastery when we saw him after his return from Arabia), and whether it was from his personality or what I do not remember, but, as I read it, I fancied I had some doubts as to its being accurate. Anyhow, finding myself at Maskat once on my way up to Persia from Bombay and spending the day with Major, as he then was, afterwards Colonel Miles, the well-known and highly-respected Resident and Consul-General, I asked him if he knew Palgrave. 'Oh yes,' he said, 'I knew Palgrave well enough.' I said: 'Do tell me what is your opinion as to the accuracy of his book.' 'Well,' he answered, 'I cannot say anything about the rest of Arabia, where I have not been, on that I have no opinion, but I can offer an opinion and more than an opinion on what he said about my district' [that was the province or kingdom of Maskat]; 'there is not a word of truth in it. I have travelled all about this district. Palgrave talks about groves of palms—they do not exist; of cities and villages, which are purely imaginary'; and he finished by saying: 'he talks about a road up that rock' (pointing to the great precipice which overlooks the harbour of Maskat). That is all I can say. It is only hearsay evidence, but anybody who knew Colonel Miles well knows he was a man whose veracity nobody could impugn; and what he said may be taken as pretty good evidence that there were grave inaccuracies in Palgrave's account of Arabia, the reliability of which I have since heard has been very much discussed."

CHAPTER X

WADI DAWASIR

1. The Threshold of the Wadi

We were now rapidly approaching the goal of our endeavour, the great mysterious valley of the Dawasir, on which no white man had ever yet set eyes, but there was nothing in the landscape about us to suggest the presence at no great distance before us of a trough or valley-feature comparable, as my companions assured me, with the Batin depression of the north. On either side of the Ghudaiyir valley, in which we camped that night, the long parallel lines of the Biyadh and Tuwaiq ran southward to the limits of our vision as they had done for about 250 miles since our arrival in the Kharj district, and the only appreciable change in the scene was a distinct roughening of the hitherto smooth surface of the Tuwaiq plateau, which had degenerated into a number of parallel ridges with troughs between them carrying the drainage of the country to the southward—the Marran trough immediately on our right behind the ridge of Umm Jadar, that of Sha'ib Hamam behind it, and behind that again the Maragha a direct affluent of the Wadi.

Three miles ahead lay the little settlement of Hamam, where we stopped awhile to water the camels on the following morning—counted for administrative purposes to the province of Wadi Dawasir, of which it is an advanced outpost. It stands, as its name implies, in the bed of Sha'ib Hamam about a mile east of its junction with the Marran at its point of issue from the Tuwaiq uplands and about two miles above its confluence with the Ghudaiyir, from which point the channel flows under the name of Hamam south-eastward into and through a wide buttressed gap in the Biyadh called Al Bazumain. Anything more miser-

able than this decayed relic of a settlement, which has known better times, it would be difficult to imagine. A rugged crag in the bed of the watercourse, some fifty feet high and surmounted by scanty ruins of a derelict fort known as Al Nakh, dominates the *Qasr* of Al 'Aud, the residence of the local *Amir*, in the middle of the settlement. Close by the *Qasr* was a grove containing nine palms and two *Ithil* trees and surrounded by a few acres of wheat stubble, for the harvest had been garnered. The eastern extremity of the hamlet was marked by a *Qasr* called Bilad al Shanna attached to a patch of cultivation, whose outstanding feature was a grove of seven palms. At three other spots were ruins of houses and wells.[1] Some seven wells serve for the irrigation of about fifty acres of corn-land, on which a small colony, perhaps fifty persons in all, of the Rashid subsection of the Wudda'in eke out a semi-nomadic existence under the guidance of one 'Abdulrahman, their negroid *Amir*. This unattractive individual was one of the small crowd, which turned out to stare open-mouthed at us on our arrival, but no invitation to coffee was forthcoming, and we delayed in the place only long enough to water the beasts. We had no sooner resumed our march, however,—not without caustic comments on the part of the ever-hungry Tami upon the inhospitality of the villagers—than the *Amir* hastened after us on foot protesting that he would see us on the way at least as far as our midday halting-place. Doubtless, he reckoned on breakfasting at our expense and pocketing a reward for so doing, but he reckoned without his host. On we plodded with him at our side through the growing heat; "Is it not time," said Ibn Jilham riding up to me, "that we stopped to break our fast?" "Nay, but we stopped," I replied, so that the *Amir* might hear, "but a short while ago to break our fast at Hamam; why then should we stop again till the afternoon?" But a little later I sought in vain among our party for the *Amir* and we halted to breakfast without him.

Beyond the Hamam channel we hugged the flank of

[1] Four *Qasrs* called Mishhabiyat close to Al Nakh; ruined wells and *Qasrs* of Bilad al Husaiyin farther upstream; and the ruined wells of Al Mughara at the western extremity of the settlement.

Tuwaiq, whose outer ridge shelved down in a bare slope towards the valley-bottom on our left; at one point they showed me the beginning of a direct track across the uplands towards Sulaiyil—a more difficult route once preferred, for the greater seclusion and safety from brigands it afforded, to the low road, which we followed along the edge of the valley and which was intersected at frequent intervals by the runnels of drainage channels from Tuwaiq, in one of which, a sandy bush-covered depression, we halted for our meal and midday siesta. The whole of this tract drains outward towards Sha'ib Hamam, whose outlet through the Bazumain gap lay opposite our camping place; but a little way farther on we passed across a low rise marking the divide between the Hamam drainage and that which flows southward to a bushy basin called Al Mahtifar, which now became visible afar off in the angle formed by the extremity of the Biyadh cliff and a cross-ridge called Na'janiyya apparently barring the valley on the south and interrupted at intervals by strips of heavy drift-sand piled up against its flank.

Soon after the resumption of our march and shortly before reaching the Rijm al Mansifa, a cairn set up on a low spur of Tuwaiq to mark the half-way point between Hamam and Sulaiyil, we passed a bushy depression recalling by its name, Hajlat al Murra, an incident of the long-drawn-out struggle between the Al Murra and Dawasir tribes, of which mention has already been made in these pages. A raiding-party of the first-named tribe, which was usually the aggressor in these contests, had retired to this spot after fruitless attempts to capture Hamam and seemed likely to perish of thirst, for all the waterings were in the hands of the enemy, when a shower, as welcome as it was unexpected, filled the depression with water sufficient to enable them not only to slake their raging thirst, but to continue the campaign so long as they held this position. Another version of the same story considers the Murra as the original inhabitants of the country and ascribes the miracle here related to the time, when, driven out by the invading Dawasir, they were wandering waterless in the desert.

The neighbourhood of Hamam was in more recent times

—in the month of *Ramdhan*, 1916—the scene of a sharp encounter between a detachment of Ibn Sa'ud's forces and a band of 'Ajman, who under the leadership of their chief, Fahad al Damir, had shortly before plundered a caravan proceeding northwards from Sulaiyil. Ibrahim and Rushaid, who had both been in the detachment comprising 200 horse and 400 camels under the command of Ibn Sa'ud's cousin, 'Abdul'aziz ibn Musa'id, fought the battle over again in recollection as they pointed out to an admiring audience the positions of the opposing forces, and told how the cavalry of the household had routed the bandits after a short resistance. On that occasion they had reached Sulaiyil, but had not gone farther up the Wadi.

Our party was augmented during the day by a most delightful person, one Hasan of the 'Arqa tribe, who, meeting us casually either at Hamam or in the neighbourhood, had volunteered to join us as guide and *Rafiq*. A great traveller in the southern desert, and intimately acquainted with Najran and the country between it and the Wadi, he proved a most valuable addition to our party, which he did much to enliven with his mellow *Badawin* humour and tales of his experiences, his mild voice and manner contrasting strangely with a burly frame and rugged countenance, on which fifty years of battling against the odds of a desert life had left their mark. He gave us news of an affray, which had recently taken place in the desert south of the Wadi, a party of twelve brigands of the Yam tribal confederacy of the Najran country having set upon four men, said to be of the Qahtan, who managed to extricate themselves from a difficult position with no worse hurt than a few bullet wounds. Among other accomplishments he boasted an unrivalled knowledge of camel-flesh, among which he distinguished four outstanding strains: the *'Umaniyya* of the southern sands bordering on 'Uman, generally of light build, great speed and dun colour; the shaggy *Hurr* of Northern Arabia bred by the 'Anaza and Huwaitat in their temperate climes; the whitish *'Arqiyya* of the Bisha and Najran tracts, a beast which cannot stand the cold, and is, therefore, seldom seen in the upper provinces; and lastly the *Dara'iyya* of the south towards the Hadhramaut, a

yellowish or light brown camel so called presumably from the name of the Yaman village whence came the ancestors of Ibn Sa'ud and the name of their old capital in Wadi Hanifa. He admitted that beyond the tracts of their origin these four breeds of riding-camels necessarily undergo a good deal of crossing with each other and with inferior types. Any Arab fortunate enough to possess a *Naqa* or cow-camel fit to breed from and desirous of procuring a mount of reasonable merit would have his cow covered by any good male he might encounter, just as the owner of an inferior mare would put her to a stallion of merit; but the pure breed of any of the strains above enumerated are, he asserted, quite unmistakable.

Having wasted much time during the day watering at Hamam and dallying for nearly five hours at our midday camp, we found ourselves still far from our destination, when the slanting rays of the sun warned us that it would be dark before we could hope to reach it. We decided, therefore, to spend the night in the first convenient spot, which would leave us only a short ride into Sulaiyil on the morrow, and accordingly turned aside up one of the strands of a *Sha'ib* called Umm al Kidad and pitched our tents in the midst of a group of low hillocks marking the fringe of the Tuwaiq uplands. I ascended one of the hillocks to get a view of the Promised Land, but there was nothing to be seen except the bare stretches of the Biyadh on the one hand, and of the Tuwaiq and Na'janiyya on the other, with a dip between the two last, over which, they told me, we should pass next day into the *Wadi* itself.

A short march of some six or seven miles over country whose general features have already been sufficiently described, brought us on the following morning to an embayment between the southern extremity of the Tuwaiq ridge and the overlapping ridge of Na'janiyya. We followed up the slope of the rapidly narrowing passage to a low saddle connecting the two ridges and forming the divide between Sha'ib Sha'diyya, draining eastward into the Mahtifar basin, and Sha'ib Salam draining in the opposite direction towards the *Wadi* channel. The *Wadi* was before us, but the view was barred by a low projection of the

Na'janiyya barrier, up whose side the well-worn track led us to its summit, and the goal of my ambition. Wadi Dawasir lay unveiled before me and I looked down on the green palm-groves of Sulaiyil by its side.

2. Sulaiyil

There was nothing beautiful or even striking about the scene before us, but a large oasis is always a cheerful spectacle after desert travelling, and time being of no account we dallied awhile at our point of vantage on a knoll of the Na'janiyya ridge to take in the details of the landscape, which for me at least had all the interest of a geographical discovery, marking a notable stage in the history of the penetration of Arabia. The Sulaiyil district was known by name, but in little else, to students of Arabian geography, whose cautious conclusions had been summarised in a recent official publication in the following terms: "This district lies south-east of Dawasir and of the Maqran depression, which is uninhabited but not unproductive; on the south of it behind a chain of heights extends the Great Desert. It is hilly in parts and drains to the S.E., but beyond the fact that it is a sandy tract, and that it contains about a dozen hamlets, all poor and savage, nothing is known about it. By some it is regarded as a sub-district of Dawasir."

The central feature of the sombre landscape was the oasis of Sulaiyil itself, a streak of brilliant green about two miles to south-west of our point of view, in a great sandy basin formed by a confluence of valleys in the heart of the Tuwaiq uplands; one of those valleys is Wadi Dawasir itself cleaving the plateau barrier in twain from west to east; the other is Sha'ib Majma', whose wide delta based on the *Wadi* thrusts northward to its apex at the southern end of the ridge-girt trough of the Maragha, of which it is a continuation. Away to the west a dozen miles or so the rugged headlands of Khashm Suwad and Khashm al Amur frowned at each other across the mile-wide gap in the western escarpment of Tuwaiq, by which the *Wadi* strikes through the barrier. From the right bank of its channel the southern mass of the plateau slopes back by easy steppes to the

summit of the uplands, whose fall is from west to east, while the northern section, broken up into ragged ridges, forms the other two sides of the triangular basin, skirting round the delta from Khashm Suwad, where it touches the western extremity of the base line, to the Na'janiyya ridge occupying a similar position at its other end.

The settlement of Sulaiyil comprises four fair-sized hamlets, several insignificant groups of huts, and some isolated *Qasrs* dotted about in or on the fringes of a palm-belt situated on the left bank of the broad sandy torrent-bed of the Majma' between the points at which the two branches of Sha'ib Salam flow into it; the average width of the belt is not more than a quarter-mile and its total length about a mile. At its north-western extremity lies the hamlet of Fara'a, more often called Al Dhuwaiyan in accordance with the common local practice of labelling a settlement with the sectional designation of the majority of its inhabitants, with a population of some 300 souls. At the other extremity, on either side of a projecting hook of the Na'janiyya ridge, stand the villages of Sabha or Al Muhammad and Dahla or Al Hanish, the latter charmingly situated in a crevice of the ridge with a dense block of palms along its outer flank; these two settlements, ancient rivals for the hegemony of the oasis, are parted from each other by a rocky spur, on whose summit I saw the remnants of stone breastworks set up in bygone days for the prosecution of a feud not yet by any means dead, and contain about 500 inhabitants each. The fourth hamlet, Muqabil or Al Suwailim, whose population is about 300 souls, stands midway between the extremities of the oasis on its eastern fringe. The lesser groups, Qasr al Khulaiyif, Nakhl 'Anqa, Al Sharq and others, with a total population not exceeding 400 souls, are regarded rather as offshoots and dependents of the larger settlements than as distinct units. The whole population of the oasis seemed to be about 2000 souls, some portion of these being negro freemen, many of them reckoned prosperous enough as the result of expeditions to the pearling tracts, but this number does not of course include the nomad [1] element—

[1] Those who own no share in the palm-groves receive a portion of the annual date crop by way of charity and in accordance with old custom.

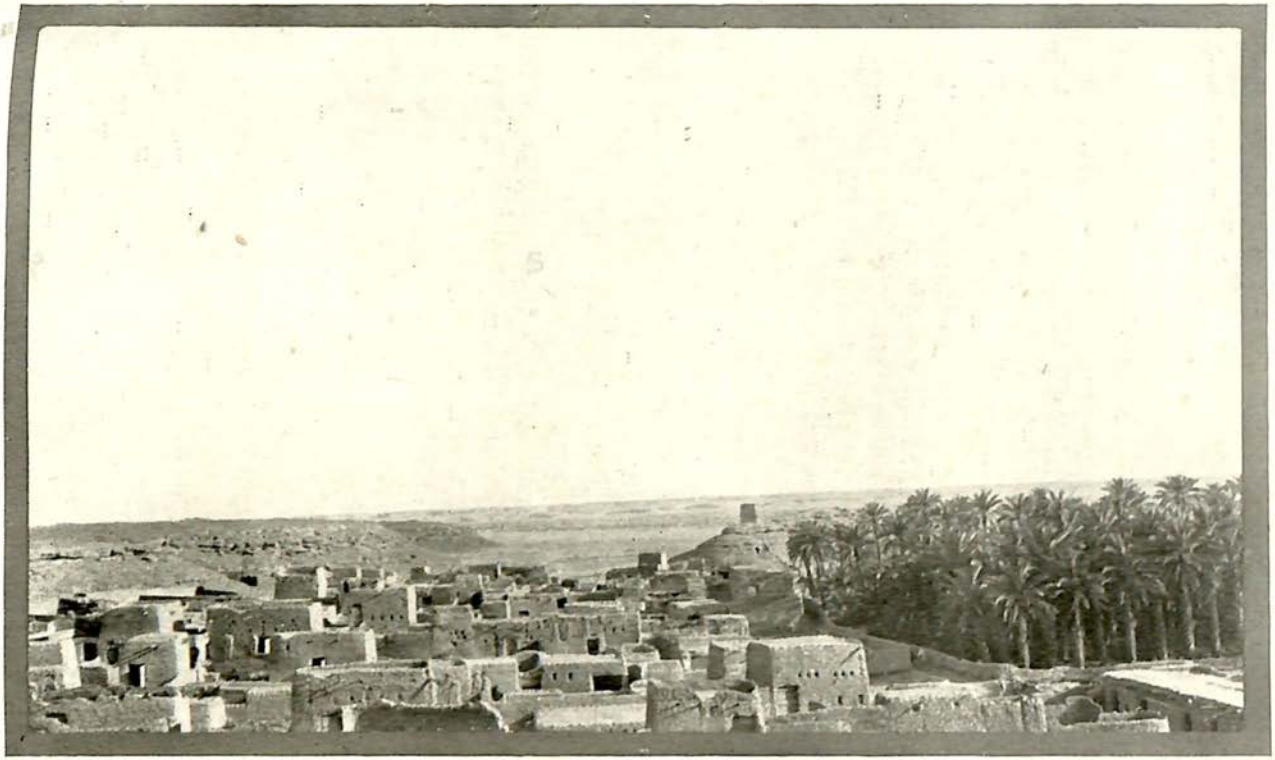
perhaps as many more—who are dependent on the oasis and return to it periodically to receive their share of its produce. All sections of the population belong to the Wudda'in group of Dawasir, who acquired the district by conquest from their Hasan cousins and predecessors in the remote past, though local tradition does not specify when and how the latter became masters of the tract or by whom it was previously held. All that is known is that the oasis originally occupied a position about a mile downstream of its present site at Latwa,[1] a tract comprising about 300 acres of well-irrigated corn-land and a few scattered clumps of palms; evidences of its former colonists survive to this day in the shape of ruined masonry habitations, graveyards and a conspicuous pile of tumbled stonework on the cliff of the Na'janiyya ridge—the remains of an old fort or hamlet known as Qasr Dhari.

Eastward of Latwa the Majma' channel joins[2] that of Wadi Dawasir, whose onward course between the low cliffs of southern Tuwaiq and Na'janiyya is impeded and reduced to a narrow torrent-runnel on either side by high dunes and ridges of *Ghadha*-covered sand. So it continues for about two miles, when the cliffs on either side merge imperceptibly in an immense sandy plain called Al Farsha,[3] across which one can follow the east-south-easterly course of the *Wadi* by the grey-green streak of its *Ghadha* bushes far on its way to the grave which awaits it in the sands of the Great Desert—two days' journey distant by local reckoning. On a lonely cairn on the last eminence of the Na'janiyya ridge I sat one morning viewing that desolate waste and the narrow band of green, which once was a mighty river; and, as I looked, I wondered whether by any means I might traverse that dreary interval between me and the sea of sand. The spirit indeed was willing but a reasonable pretext was wanting, and the rumour of marauding bands of the wild *Badawin* of Najran was quite enough to decide

[1] Of the twenty-four wells of Latwa three belong to Al Muhammad and the rest to Al Hanish.

[2] The actual confluence of the two channels is known as Al Mafrash.

[3] Between Al Farsha and the sands of the Empty Quarter is said to be a hard stony plain called Al Hidba with a width of twenty miles.



The hamlet of Al Hanish in the oasis of Sulaiyil.

my companions against a venture so barren. Only a few nights before a raiding gang of six men, who had paid flying visits to the Maqran and Hamam with some success, had reconnoitred Sulaiyil on the chance of finding it asleep, but had thought better of the matter and hastened homeward on seeing and exchanging unprofitable shots with a small party from the oasis, who happened to be out in the neighbourhood searching for a missing camel. "If ever you should come again to these parts," said Hasan the *'Arqani*, "ask for me; I am Hasan ibn Ghanim and the *Amir* of Sulaiyil will know where to find me; and I will take you where you will, and we will hunt the *Oryx* together." And so with a heavy heart I turned back towards our camp, comforting myself with the reflection that I had at least solved one of the great problems of Arabian geography—the problem of Wadi Dawasir. "It is practically certain," says the publication already referred to, "that the fall of the drainage of Wadi Dawasir is from S.W. to N.E., and that it is lost ultimately in sands." True that it is ultimately lost in sands, but its course thither is from north-west to south-east, a fact which postulates a south-easterly pent of the southern half of the peninsula and leaves us to imagine the *Wadi* in the days of its existence as a river flowing down to a sea cutting off the 'Uman promontory from the rest of Arabia.

Our sojourn at Sulaiyil lasted three days, during which the feuds of the oasis faithfully reflected themselves in the reception accorded us by its several communities. Instinct had warned our leaders not to claim the hospitality of any particular section in the first instance, but to select for our camp a neutral site not too close to either of the premier hamlets. We had accordingly pitched our tents in an open space outside the eastern fringe of the palm-belt in the neighbourhood of the Suwailim settlement, but had no sooner done so than we received a message from 'Abdullah ibn Nadir, the chief of the Hanish, of whose genial personality and open-handed hospitality Ibrahim and Rushaid treasured pleasant recollections from their last visit to the locality, inviting us to dine with him in the evening, and begging us to move our camp to a spot within the radius of his effective

protection. We excused ourselves from accepting the latter suggestion, but gladly availed ourselves of the invitation to dinner soon after sundown on the first day of our stay. I spent an hour or two previous to the appointed hour in strolling with Mitrak, Nasir, and Tuwairish about the oasis and the sandy flats between the Majma' and the *Wadi*; and returning homewards we repaired straight to the hamlet of Dahla and presented ourselves at the doorway of the *Amir's* residence, where the rest of the party had already arrived. Abdullah greeted us very warmly and we were soon at home seated on matting strips in the large courtyard of the building, conversing with our host and a few invited guests from the village and imbibing tea—a luxury in the south—and coffee, and perfuming ourselves at frequent intervals from a fragrant censer. In due course two large mats were brought in and two portentous trays piled high with rice and mutton, to which the assembled company did ample justice to the obvious satisfaction of the master of the house, of whom we took our leave immediately on the conclusion of the meal to leave him and his household sufficient time to prepare for the evening prayer.

A bale or two of piece-goods, imported from India by way of Bahrain and the Hasa, betrayed the commercial activities of our host, an old man of about sixty, full of intelligence, who made no secret of his pride in the position attained by Sulaiyil as a commercial clearing-house, for it is here, he explained, that the overland coffee trade of Yaman meets Indian piece-goods and sugar imported from the opposite direction for the benefit of himself and his fellow-brokers, who make their profits on the resulting exchange. It struck me as somewhat incongruous that the Indian market should thus be supplying the Turkish garrisons in Yaman and Asir with stuffs denied to them by our Red Sea patrol by a route so roundabout, but I refrained from comment out of consideration for the feelings of 'Abdullah, and contented myself with hoping that he exacted the uttermost farthing for what must have been but a poor solace to the enemy for his protracted exile in the mountains of Arabia. Najran, the southern terminus of this long trade route, is said to lie about seven days' reasonable caravan journey

across an ill-watered desert almost due south of this spot and at about the same distance south-east of the Wadi oasis itself by a route more generously supplied with wells; but the Sulaiyil route, being more direct for caravans proceeding northward, is generally preferred to the alternative highway, by which rice from the Mecca market is taken southward. So far as I was able to observe, most of the commercial work of the oasis is done informally in private houses rather than in shops of which there are only four—all at one extremity of the Muhammad hamlet.

Recent arrivals from the south had brought news of an encounter between the Idrisi and the Imam Yahya, in which some 400 men had been killed on both sides including forty warriors of Najran and an important *Shaikh* of the Idrisi's following; the Imam had been defeated with the loss of a gun, but the details of the affair were obscured by distance and local ignorance, and in answer to further enquiries, I was informed that there had been British officers on both sides. The extent of the ignorance prevailing in these parts regarding the affairs of the world may be judged by the fact that 'Abdullah [1] knew of no Turks in Yaman or Asir, and imagined that the nearest Turkish garrison was that of Madina. Reports were also current of a fight between the Turks and the *Sharifial* forces at Lith on the Red Sea littoral, and of the arrival of the Sharif in person at Muwaih near 'Ashaira for the settlement of the Khurma trouble. I ventured to express a doubt as to the correctness of the latter item and created quite a sensation by doing so, though it was admitted after further discussion that my doubts were probably justified.

The people of Najran had recently, it transpired, sent a deputation to Ibn Sa'ud inviting him to come down and lead them against the enemy, and 'Abdullah, who yielded to no one in his admiration for, and loyalty to, the *Wahhabi* monarch, spoke enthusiastically of a growing tendency among the tribesmen of the south to regard Ibn Sa'ud as their natural leader, and to adopt the *Wahhabi* faith. Until quite recently Sulaiyil itself had been a veritable bear-

[1] On the other hand he asked intelligent questions about the Masqat gun-running business and the activities of Indian troops in the war.

garden of civil strife, but peace had been imposed on the warring factions by the last expedition from Riyadh and had not since been disturbed.

The cordiality of the reception accorded to me by the Hanish community on the first day of my stay was not lost on the rival hamlet of Al Muhammad, on which devolved by custom the responsibility and privilege of entertaining us, the guests of the oasis, on the following day; but Ibn Rubai'a, the *Amir* of Sabha, was too astute a politician to play second fiddle to his most dangerous rival or to miss a chance of getting even with him on an issue of the first magnitude. 'Abdullah had proved false to his faith by entertaining an infidel and thus countenancing the desecration of the oasis; he, at least, Ibn Sa'ud's orders notwithstanding, would be guilty of no such offence. Active measures being out of the question, he contented himself with adopting an attitude of passive resistance and the second day dawned, fraught, unknown to me, with infinite possibilities. Throughout the day I was unaware that anything unusual was happening and in the evening, having been out for a stroll about the oasis, I returned to my tent and settled down to write up my diary and read till dinner should be ready. Suddenly I became aware of angry voices not far distant followed without warning by ominous cries from my companions: "*Silahukum! Silahukum!*" ("To your arms! to your arms!") they shouted, and seizing my rifle and cartridge-belt I dashed out of my tent to see what was amiss. Some of my companions were already streaming out of the camp across the open space between us and Sabha, whence a multitude of excited persons was issuing to meet them; the remainder were loading their rifles and taking up positions along a low mud parapet close to our camp. A furious altercation seemed to be taking place in the middle of the arena and it looked as if a conflict was inevitable, but I was unable to find out just then what it was all about and took my place among the defenders of the camp awaiting the sound of the first shot, which would be the signal for a general *mêlée*. That first shot was never fired and the protagonists of both parties drew away from each other in sullen silence after about an hour's wordy duel, in which

'Abdullah ibn Nadir intervened as peacemaker with an effective threat to attack Sabha if its inhabitants did not desist from their intention of attacking us. Ibrahim now led back his warriors to camp, where I gained some idea of the origin and course of the trouble from an excited controversy during the evening meal, which took the form of strong criticism of the manner in which Ibrahim had handled a delicate situation. In the morning, it transpired, the necessary provision of fuel and fodder, which custom gave us the right to expect from Sabha, had not been forthcoming and Ibrahim, piqued by the challenge implied in the withholding of supplies, had very unwisely sent a messenger to Ibn Rubai'a demanding not only fuel and fodder but a measure of grain in the name of Ibn Sa'ud. The message was received with derisive remarks about infidels and the messenger sent back empty-handed; whereupon Ibrahim sent two armed slaves to demand the immediate attendance of the offending *Amir* to explain his conduct; the slaves were disarmed and sent back with an insulting message. Ibn Jilham was now sent out with a small following to demand the restitution of the arms and an apology, and it was while he was engaged on this errand that the final outburst occurred. I fully concurred in the general verdict that Ibrahim had acted unwisely in forcing the issue so unnecessarily, but he was quite impenitent and rose suddenly from his place at dinner with an expression of disgust at the criticisms levelled at him, and a declaration that he would insist on an apology from Ibn Rubai'a. Tami, who had been away at the time of the occurrence endeavouring with the assistance of Tuwairish to find a suitable wife among the maidens of Al Hanish, provoked some merriment by relating that an old hag of the hamlet had told him, in answer to his enquiries about the noise, that Ibrahim had slain Ibn Rubai'a and had himself been killed in the ensuing fray. Deputations from Dahla and the other hamlets came in to our camp after dinner with invitations to coffee, presents of sheep and other things, and expressions of regret at the unfortunate incident, but no sign of penitence was forthcoming from the offending section until next day when we repaired to 'Abdullah's house for coffee. While we were there two

emissaries from Ibn Rubai'a came in to communicate an expression of regret on his part and to beg forgiveness, which Ibrahim granted at the intercession of our host; and later in the day Ibn Rubai'a sent in a peace-offering of forty dollars for distribution among the slaves he had offended, and also offered to supply us with anything we might require, but present and offer were both declined with thanks, and the curtain descended on the last act of a comedy which might have been more unpleasant. In some ways the occurrence possibly proved a blessing in disguise, for the only issue on which our presence could be objected to had been publicly raised and we had won on points—though by a narrow margin.

Apart from the hostility of the Muhammad section we had little to complain of in regard to the attitude of the oasis folk, who exhibited a certain amount of curiosity about our visit, and whenever I met them in the palm-groves or elsewhere, returned my greeting, and in some cases entered into conversation with me with a great show of cordiality. We naturally saw more of 'Abdullah and his son, Majid, a man of the same mould as his father, than of any others; we had dined with them on the first day and had coffee in their house on the day after the trouble, and they and a few others dined with us on the last night of our stay. The only other person who actually entertained us was a relative of Tuwairish, by name Ibrahim, who, meeting us in a street of Dahla, very cordially invited us to his house, where a small assembly of his friends gathered to do us honour, one of the party being a decrepit old man reputed to be over 100 years old. On this occasion I was introduced for the first time to a favourite beverage of the south, a substitute for tea made with coffee-husks—*Qishr*—in place of tea-leaves; the taste for this drink has to be acquired, but I found it pleasant enough in small doses, though a sickly brew.

One morning we made a short excursion up the Majma' channel past the five little hillocks of Muzarrar on its right bank to the remnants of a small derelict settlement called Bahja; a single ruined *Qasr* and a well with a little water at a depth of seven fathoms was all that remained amid

a coppice of *Ithils*, but there used formerly to be cultivation about the tract which is still resorted to occasionally by shepherds. A similar remnant of former times lies in the bed of Sha'ib Sudaira, a tributary of the Majma' from the west, and is known as Nakhl al Fuh though it is palmless.

In the matter of corn and dates [1] the oasis of Sulaiyil is self-supporting, and the dense palm-groves [2] of the settlement with their heavy pendent bunches of yet green fruit struck me as being no whit inferior to the best groves of Saih or Riyadh. As at Saih the palms are not shorn of their *karabs*, the thick bases of the fronds used in Mesopotamia and Upper Arabia as fuel though little required for that purpose in the south, with the result that the stems are thicker and have a knotty appearance contrasting with the smooth slender stems of other parts, where the demand for fuel is heavier; they say that the preservation of the *karabs* is beneficial to the palms. Cotton is grown sporadically and I actually saw one small field wholly under the crop—an unusual method of cultivation in Arabia, and, to judge by this single instance, not very successful. Pomegranates and saffron I neither saw nor heard of; beans [3] of the climbing variety grown in festoons up the palm-stems, egg-fruit, and other vegetables were plentiful; vines and lemon trees I saw frequently, and a few fig trees.[4] Irrigation is partly by flood [5] from the Majma' torrents, and for the rest by wells varying in depth from three to seven fathoms according to position and season, for at flood-time the water rises in them as much as two fathoms; camels are used almost exclusively for well-traction—a sign of prosperity. Our visit fell in the *Saif* or summer season to which local reckoning allows a duration of forty days calculated from the setting of the *Pleiades*—a season accounted the worst of the whole year for camels, whose fat-centres and pads are adversely affected by the heat; I

[1] The dominant varieties here are *Siri* and *Makwizi*.

[2] Most of the groves have special names, *e.g. Butaiha, Sufaiya*, etc.

[3] *Lubiya*.

[4] *Ithil* is abundant, and I saw a good sprinkling of castor-oil plants (*vide* p. 198 *infra*).

[5] The Majma' had *sail*-ed three times during the past winter and spring.

was, however, pleasantly surprised at the climate which was cool during the nights—my lowest recorded temperature was under 70° Fahr.—and worked up during the day to a maximum temperature of 109° or 110° Fahr.

For administrative purposes the Sulaiyil district, which includes Hamam on the north and the Tamra group of oases to the west, is regarded as part of the Wadi province and is under the general control of the provincial governor residing as Ibn Sa'ud's representative at Dam, the provincial capital. Within the limits of the district, however, the affairs of each hamlet are administered independently by its sectional chief, and the policy of *Divide et impera* is pursued in parochial matters in the interests of the State; each chief collects the revenue due from his section generally in kind, and holds the surplus over local expenditure at the disposal of Ibn Sa'ud and his viceroy.

3. The Last Lap

On May 26, with kindly farewells to 'Abdullah and others who had assembled to see us off, we started out from Sulaiyil on the last stage of our journey, and crossing the Majma', traversed a broad strip of dunes covered with *Shinan*, *Asal* [1] and other bushes of the *Hamdh* type to the edge of the 'Afja, as the intramontane section of the Dawasir valley is locally called; the Sulaiyil people sometimes speak of it more vaguely as the Batin, but never as the *Wadi* or Wadi Dawasir, much less Wudyan Dawasir which would be a misnomer as there is but one valley in question; the term Al Wadi, or more rarely Wadi Dawasir, seems to be exclusively reserved by usage to the actual oasis of Wadi Dawasir and never applied to any part of the channel, whose continuity is, however, vaguely recognised.

The 'Afja bed is for the most part, and especially to the west in the neighbourhood of the gap, a broad strip of salt-impregnated loam with sandy interruptions richly clad with the bushes above mentioned, of which the *Shinan* has a considerable economic value, its ashes when burned being

[1] The same species as *Suwad*.

used as soap for laundry purposes and having the reputation of imparting a rich gloss to white linen. The saline bottom, which showed here and there in extensive snow-white patches, being unsuitable for camel traffic especially after rain, the high road to the west crosses the *Wadi* and skirts its right bank along the firm ground of the Tuwaiq slope, down which at intervals run petty torrent rills [1] to the edge of the valley.

In one of these, somewhat larger than the rest, Sha'ib Dahna, we halted awhile to breakfast by a single *Mishash* with a scanty supply of good clear water at a depth of three feet, obtainable only during or shortly after the seasonal floods by scraping away the sand at the bottom. On a ridge overlooking the torrent I found an extensive patch of cairns —circular mounds of stone *débris* too numerous to be mere cairns, and yet situated too far from any possible habitable site to be reckoned in the same category as the Aflaj ruins. In some respects they bore a close resemblance to the cairns seen by the side of the road across the Biyadh promontory, the mounds being built up largely of flat or slate-like pieces of rock and in many cases having a narrow stone-lined causeway on one side. It was possibly a cemetery, not necessarily ancient, on the scene of some tribal battle, and, if so, the same explanation probably applies to the Biyadh mounds. Not far from this spot they pointed out to me some white stones—to all appearance like boundary marks—set up on the site of a battle fought in the past between the people of Sulaiyil and those of Tamra; the stones had been set up by the victors—the Tamra folk, I think—to commemorate their success, white being the badge of victory. Among the *Wahhabis* those who distinguish themselves in battle are rewarded by public acclamation in the formula: *Baiyidh allah wajhhu* [2] (May God whiten his face, *i.e.* in Paradise).

As the road approaches the Tuwaiq gap the southern uplands fall back in a deep bay down which Sha'ib Amur descends through the oasis of Tamra into the *Wadi*; on the eastern side of the mouth of this embayment and on the gentle slope of the hill lies the straggling oasis of Khuthaiqan,

[1] Sha'ib Sumair, Sha'ib Libat.

[2] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 125.

a settlement of the Dhuwaiyan with a population of some 100 souls in all living in scattered *Qasrs* and one small hamlet alongside the largest of a number of small palm-groves dotted irregularly over a narrow tract a mile long. The soil here is full of salt and the well-water, plentiful at a depth of three or four fathoms, is extremely brackish; most of the palm-groves are of recent plantation, perhaps ten or fifteen years, and only the largest of them seemed to be somewhat older, the Dhuwaiyan colonists having migrated hither from Sulaiyil.

From the farther end of the oasis marked by two small watch-towers, erected doubtless to guard against surprise by the hostile inhabitants of Tamra, we turned into the bay up the course of the Amur and, passing the outlying Shara hamlet of the latter settlement, soon found ourselves in the neighbourhood of the larger Al Faris hamlet where we had decided to spend the rest of that day and the next to give our forerunners—Rushaid and 'Aïdh one of our *'Arqani Rafiqs*—plenty of time to warn the people of the Wadi of our coming and to rejoin us, we hoped, with a stock of tobacco, which the first-named had been commissioned to procure by hook or by crook, as we had drawn blank at Sulaiyil.

A hillock in the neighbourhood, surmounted by a stone breastwork or roofless fort with loopholes, gave us a splendid view over the oasis and the surrounding country. The Tamra embayment is lined by high bluffs of the uplands, which run round to the abrupt headland of Khashm al Amur dominating the gap of Tuwaiq from the southern side as Khashm Suwad does from the opposite extremity. In and on either side of the gap the bed of the *Wadi* formed a sheet of dazzling white, over which sprawled the palm plantation of Kabkabiyya; through the gap to the westward we could see an immense expanse of sandy desert extending unbroken into the distance from the steep wall of the Tuwaiq escarpment running northward in an endless *échelon* of headlands along its eastern flank. No sign could we see of the settlements of the Wadi itself.

Whether the news of the trouble at Sulaiyil had preceded us or not we were accorded a public reception on our arrival,

THE VILLAGE OF TAMRA IN WADI DAWASIR.

the *Amir* of Tamra and a considerable proportion of its male population having assembled at the spot selected for our camp to receive us. It was a pleasant *Ithil*-shaded spot in the sandy bed of the *Sha'ib* and, a fire being hastily lighted and preparations made for coffee, we all sat round in a large circle conversing in the desultory fashion of the Arabs. As at Sulaiyil the main topic of conversation here was the price of coffee and *Qishr*—the Sulaiyil quotation [1] at this time being one and a half dollars *per Sa'* of two *Waznas* for the former and between two and three (actually two and a half) *Sa's* of *Qishr* for a dollar. On the way I had noticed a small flock of white-fleeced sheep,[2] which, I was told, had been brought down recently for sale from the Tathlith valley in the Asir highlands; the sheep of the Dawasir like those of Najd generally are black. Meat and rice, too, are rare luxuries in these parts, so much so that we were unable to procure either sheep or goats at Sulaiyil itself; the deficiency in our larder was, however, remedied on the arrival of the owner of the above-mentioned flock with an advance instalment of eight sheep, all of which we bought up, on being warned that we were not likely to find mutton available anywhere on the route or at the Wadi itself.

The Tamra oasis is a prosperous settlement containing some excellent palm-groves with a promising crop of fruit, some corn-land and much *Ithil*, some of it grown into great trees; a good deal of cotton is also grown, not as a border plant or in fields, but in small but solid clumps—the plants being reckoned to continue productive for about five years, when they are uprooted and replaced by others; onions appeared to be the dominant vegetable crop. The population of the settlement is about 500 souls, of whom about

[1] The quotation at the Wadi I found to be somewhat higher, namely, one *Wazna* per dollar. The standard of weight as of currency in Central Arabia is the dollar or *Riyal*, the *Wazna*, which varies from district to district, being the weight equivalent of 50 *Riyals* at Riyadh, of 51 or 52 in the Qasim, of 55 at Sulaiyil, and of 60 in the Wadi; one *Sa'* is the equivalent of two *Waznas* everywhere. Thus allowing for the difference in the *Wazna* one dollar would buy 73 *Riyals'* weight of coffee at Sulaiyil, and only 60 in the Wadi.

[2] White fleeces are designated *Habs*.

100 reside in the Shara hamlet and the rest in the main hamlet of Faris, these names being those of the two sections of the Amur, a tribal group, which, although affiliated to the Dawasir by long social intercourse, are not of Dawasir stock and constitute one of four independent groups collectively classed as Abat Dawasir—possibly a surviving remnant of the pre-Dawasir occupants of the valley, but of them I shall have more to say when discussing the advent of the Dawasir themselves.

Soon after the *'Asr* prayer we repaired in a body to pay a formal visit to Falih ibn Faris, the *Amir*. His house was situated in the middle of the Faris hamlet, and the coffee-parlour, in which we forgathered with our host and many of his fellow-villagers—a company of nearly fifty persons including ourselves—was as mean and dingy an apartment as any in Arabia. Some eighteen feet in length and half as much in breadth, it had no aperture except the door by which we entered and a tiny wooden window about eighteen inches square. A hot fire blazed on the hearth at one end of the room and the atmosphere soon became stifling; the temperature outside in the shade must have been about 108° Fahr. and within several degrees higher. Words cannot describe the acute discomfort I experienced as we sat huddled together in that narrow space—luckily I was placed between the two apertures though barely a yard from the fire—imbibing hot coffee and husk-water. Conversation was almost impossible in the circumstances, but, seeing what I was in for as soon as I entered the place, I determined to resign myself to the ordeal for the sake of the experience and to let my hosts make the conversation. For three-quarters of an hour I sat thus in a bath of perspiration, and during that time neither my host, who was seated at the hearth, nor any one else except Ibrahim addressed a single word to me; in desperation I suggested that it was time for me to take my leave, but even then no attempt was made to bring me into the half-audible and desultory conversation, and I rose to go without have exchanged a single remark with anybody. Once outside again, I felt chilled to the bone in spite of the blazing afternoon sun, so I set off at a brisk

pace towards the rough uplands beyond the hamlet and did not stop till I reached the summit. I was now feeling better and sat down with Jabir, Mitrak, Nasir and 'Ubaid, who had arrived puffing and panting in pursuit of me, to view the scene and chat quietly as the sun slowly sank to its setting, when we strolled homeward through the oasis. They too had felt much discomfort in that overheated room, but "*Ma ya'rafun*" ("They know no better"), they said, partly to explain the villagers' curious ideas of an afternoon's enjoyment and partly to excuse their boorish silence. I marvelled at the well-meant but cheerless hospitality of the south country, and wondered whether the villagers did really prefer such an entertainment to sitting out in the blazing sun; I certainly thought the latter infinitely preferable.

In order to induce some of my companions to accompany me next day on a short excursion to the summit of the uplands on the west side of the embayment I offered three prizes for the first three men to reach the top. The proposal was agreed to with much enthusiasm, and I found myself at an early hour at the foot of the ridge with a dozen eager competitors. Leaving them at the foot I walked up to the first ridge and, having already explained that the winners would be those who first reached the highest part of the uplands, gave the signal for the start. I walked on looking back on the scramble up the rough hill-side; the distance was perhaps half a mile and the rise some three hundred feet in three sharp slopes separated by intervals of rolling downs. The winner was 'Ubaid the *Qahtani*, with 'Ubaiyid, a negroid underling, and Nasir the *'Ataibi* a poor second and third; the rest were nowhere, and many were quite overcome by the unwonted exertion, but all were as happy as larks when we assembled on the summit to partake of a simple breakfast. A couple of gazelles, of dark brown colour, were disturbed by the noise we made, but scarcely gave the ever-willing Mitrak a chance as they disappeared over the brow of the hill followed by a belated shot. A few minutes later a fox was observed sneaking away, and Mitrak, never to be done, treated us to an exhibition of stalking, but soon lost sight of his quarry, which slowly wandered down the

precipice in full view of every one except his pursuer to the plain below, where he disappeared in the Kabkabiyya plantation. The view from the summit of Khashm al Amur was disappointing, though we had a distant view of the Kimida oasis out on the western plain; elsewhere the Tuwaiq plateau held the stage on every side, the promontory of Farda blocking our view towards the south-west, while to eastward the palms of Tamra, Khuthaiqan and Sulaiyil in the distance showed up in the 'Afja trough.

In the afternoon I walked out with Jabir, Mitrak and a few others down the Amur *Sha'ib* and across the *Wadi* bed to the foot of the Suwad headland and back; the going over the brittle *Sabkha* soil was heavy and we had to pick our way in and out of the dense coppices of *Asal*, five or six feet high, which covered the broad channel. On the way conversation turned on a curious point of doctrine which had caused my companions no little searching of heart since their arrival in these parts. The *Adhan* or call to prayer is proclaimed in the south country immediately after sunset and before sunrise when the sky is bright with the actual light of the sun, whereas farther north the morning call is made just before the first light of dawn and the evening call when the last vestige of the sun's light has disappeared. Shaikh 'Abdullah, the primate of Riyadh, insists that punctual observance of the correct moment of prayer is the primary consideration, which must have precedence of all others, including the formal ablution which can in certain circumstances be dispensed with altogether, as, for instance, when water cannot be reached before the psychological moment arrives. The southern heresy, therefore, had elicited much unfavourable comment and even indignant expressions of disgust on the part of my companions, who held that the practice of *Qadha* or making good an omission to pray at the correct moment is only permissible when the omission is caused by no fault of the individual concerned. *Sabkha* soil is deemed to be unclean, and prayers may not be said on it. In other respects, however—these restrictions marking, perhaps, the beginnings of theological hair-splitting among the simple Arabs of the desert—*Wahhabi* prayers are conspicuous for their informal

character; provided that the service is begun at the correct moment the late arrival of individual worshippers is considered immaterial; much diversity from the correct attitudes, even if it amounts to inattention, is permitted; haste is tolerated and a worshipper may even break off to bring an unruly camel to order and resume his place as if nothing had occurred and without even the obligation to begin afresh. According to Hasan congregational prayers are not the rule in Najran, where each individual prays in solitary state.[1]

The following morning, no news having been received of or from Rushaid, we resumed our march westward on the assumption that the coast was clear for our arrival at the Wadi oasis. Rounding the base of Khashm al Amur we skirted the extensive palm-plantation of Kabkabiyya, the property of the Tamra people and situated in a wide patch of *Sabkha* soil; in the whole plantation there are neither habitations nor wells, and the only concern of the owners is to visit the place at harvest time to gather the dates, which fertilise themselves and draw the requisite nourishment from the natural moisture of the salty soil, which absorbs the little rain it receives and retains it near the surface.

From this point the outer escarpment of southern Tuwaiq trends in a south-westerly direction, its course being marked by jutting headlands rising in sheer precipices from the level of the plain; mounds of *débris* litter the foot of the wall and in some places in close proximity to the headlands the weathering of the rock had left wholly or partly detached sandstone pyramids on the edge of the plain. The western wall of the northern uplands was now seen to advantage, as it ran back northwards to the limit of our vision along the fringe of the plain; to west and north stretched a boundless plain of sandy loam with broad patches of dunes and some saline ground.

Immediately beyond the Khashm al Amur the two headlands of Farda jut out into the plain from a very rough section of the escarpment, a favourite spot for the depredations of bandits[2] from the south, who, lurking among the precipices of the cliff, descend by paths known

[1] *Vide* p. 228 *infra*.

[2] Mainly of the Sulum and Rizq tribes.

only to themselves to rob caravans passing along the *Wadi* and make off again into the mountain recesses long before help can arrive. These cliffs are ominously nicknamed Al Muqatil. As we skirted along them we had our patrols in advance to guard against surprise and kept a watchful eye on the summit and face of the crags, not stopping for breakfast until we had diverged to a safe distance from the escarpment and reached a bushy *Sha'ib* called Zaul al Magharr, descending from it to the *Wadi* channel on our right. These notorious robbers are reputed to confine their attentions for the most part to solitary travellers and small caravans, but in so insecure a tract it behoved us to move with due caution. From the spot at which we halted we had a splendid view of the headlands of Southern Tuwaiq extending into the distance as far as we could see.

In due course we moved on across the plain and soon found ourselves picking our way through a wilderness of *Ghadha*-covered dunes, which have completely obliterated all signs of the *Wadi* channel; the sand, which in the intervals between ridges and dunes overlay a firm limestone soil, was not of the reddish *Nafud* colour, but white and gritty. So we marched for about ten miles, with never a change of feature until we came to the wretched little oasis-settlement of Kimida in a clearing walled around with tall stout *Ithils* to form a fence against the encroaching sand.

Here we were met by bad news, which determined us to break our journey. The *Amir*, Faris ibn Raqis, met us on our arrival with a messenger just arrived post-haste from the governor of the Wadi with the following tale: no sooner had Rushaid and 'Aïdh reached their destination and the news got round that they were forerunners of a party which included an infidel, than the people of Dam, the capital of the Wadi, swarmed round the governor's palace angrily protesting that they would not have the infidel in their midst, and would oppose our entry by force. The governor and local *Qadhi* took counsel together, and having come to the conclusion that Ibn Sa'ud's orders must be obeyed, informed the folk of Dam—apparently a hotbed of fanaticism and turbulence—that if they did not modify their attitude the *Badawin* and loyal *Hadhr* would be called in

to teach them a lesson. Rushaid and 'Aïdh were subjected to a hostile demonstration and the governor deemed it advisable to keep them in safety in his palace lest they might be lynched on their return to us. He had accordingly sent one of his own retainers to inform us of the trouble and to beg us to delay our arrival until the following day, to give the passions roused by the first news of our coming time to subside. The messenger could tell us no more than that a small body of the more violent hotheads of the capital had proceeded, in spite of the governor's warning, to picket the outlying groves of Sharafa, the first of the Wadi settlements, against our coming. I feared attempts might be made to dissuade me from the venture, and was much relieved to find the general opinion to be in favour of our proceeding with our programme on the morrow, preceded by Ibn Jilham, who set off during the afternoon armed with letters to the governor and a sharply worded ultimatum to the people of Dam.

This being settled, I spent the rest of the day wandering about the oasis, an extensive but ill-cultivated settlement about one mile from end to end and half a mile across, occupying an unburied remnant of the *Wadi* bed with a plentiful but brackish supply of subsoil water at a depth of between three and four fathoms. Only one of the 150 wells, which are said to dot the scattered cultivated patches of the settlement, produces drinkable water and many of the rest are either abandoned or in a decadent condition. The chief feature of the oasis is its forest of *Ithil* trees, the best of their kind I have seen in Arabia, grown to a great height with trunks of corresponding girth and in full bloom with the *Kirma* or pinkish clusters of tiny berries, which enjoy a great reputation as a dye and are said to be found only in the south, the *Ithils* of Upper Arabia being entirely barren. The palm-groves of the settlement are of the most wretched description, covering a considerable area with dead stumps and occasional remnants of stunted fruitless palms; I noticed also some fields of cotton, perhaps ten or twelve acres in all of ill-grown plants, whose last vestiges of verdure were in course of removal by droves of hungry goats; for the rest a certain amount of vegetables and

lucerne was in evidence, but the main and only serious crop was wheat, the surplus of which over local requirements provides the inhabitants with their only means of procuring dates and coffee from the Wadi.

Kimida, counted by local reckoning as part of the Wadi oasis, from whose eastern extremity it is about twelve miles distant, is a small colony of about 100 souls of the Haqban, a group like the Amur of the Abat Dawasir and, therefore, not of Dawasir origin. This small population is congregated in a small walled hamlet with an insignificant watch-tower at its south-western corner and a single gate on the north side, by which one enters a large open space from which the wretched mud-hovels and streets radiate. The population showed no sign of aversion towards us, and the *Amir* was very friendly, joining us for coffee during the day and at dinner, and entertaining us to coffee in his house in the evening; his parlour was a small square apartment with a covering of fine sand over the floor in lieu of carpets or matting and his coffee was none too good, owing to the execrable quality of the water. The people of the settlement have most of them at one time or another played a part in the pearl-fisheries of the Gulf; the lure of the home-land must be strong indeed to drag them back to such a place.

The country before us, when at dawn next day we resumed our interrupted march, differed from that which we had traversed the previous day in being a very gently undulating sandy plain sparsely sprinkled with *Ghadha*, and only here and there exhibiting anything in the nature of dunes or sandhills; the distant wall of Tuwaiq behind us alone relieved the monotony of the featureless landscape. Our course lay along a shallow depression, which I took at the time to be the bed of the *Wadi*, though it afterwards became clear that it was but one of several such troughs trending across the plain and not the one selected by the only flood within human memory.

The march was a somewhat dismal one; the air was chill and damp at that early hour; and we knew not what the next few hours might have in store for us; we knew that at any rate we should look upon the Wadi, but not whether we should enter it or return to tell the tale. We

marched on in silence for two hours towards a barrier of sand which closed the view ahead. Just before we reached it we saw a dark patch of *Rak* bushes in a trough somewhat to our right, and knew that in a few moments we should be in view of the watchers on the other side. A halt was called, we couched our camels at the base of the barrier and proceeded cautiously on foot to its summit to inspect the scene.

4. The Wadi Oasis

The scene that met our gaze from the summit of the sand-ridge, where we halted to break our fast and spy out the land, will live long in my memory rather for sentimental reasons than for any merit of its own. I saw at last that which I had come so far through the desert to see, and mine were the first Western eyes to look upon the palm-groves of Wadi Dawasir. About two miles away from us, to the north-west, lay the fringe of the Sharafa palms, picketed for all we knew by hostile marksmen, and beyond it, lined on either side by desert sands, a broad belt of palms extended as far as we could see to the westward along a shallow depression, which was the bed of Wadi Dawasir itself. Here and there a hamlet of mud-huts showed through a screen of palms and on the open plain south of the palm-belt, from whose eastern extremity the valley bottom, sun-cracked and bare, ran out a few miles into the enveloping sands past an *Ithil* patch called Ghaif and the great patch of bushes which they call Raka. Behind us in the far distance ran the long wall of Tuwaiq with the Tamra gap due east of us and its visible extremities to north-west and south-south-east. Such was the scene.

Of human movement we saw no sign and, having disposed of breakfast and prepared our rifles for all emergencies, we returned to our camels, mounted and were soon moving across the plain in a compact body in full view of anybody who might be on the look-out. We bore well away from the palm-fringe to avoid surprise, but had not gone far when we observed a movement of men in the plain before us; they were seen to mount and advance towards us; little

by little the distance between us and them decreased and we strained our eyes to see whether Ibn Jilham or Rushaid was among them, bracing ourselves at the same time to give them a proper reception should they prove to be foes. Scarce a quarter-mile separated us, when they, a score or more, broke into a rapid trot and advanced, brandishing rifles and chanting war-songs, preceded by two outriders on diminutive Arab ponies. Our suspense was soon at an end as, horsemen and camel riders, they launched themselves upon us shouting and riding through and round us with the strange evolutions of Arab mimic—and real—warfare. They were friends not foes—Ibn Jilham and Rushaid with an escort of the *Amir's* own men—and warmly we greeted them.

By this time we were level with the hamlets and groves of Sharafa, where a dark figure or two on the housetops was the measure of the interest we had aroused. On we held, continuing on the advice of Ibn Jilham to give the palm-belt a wide berth and intending not to draw rein until we had reached the security of the *Amir's* palace; but, when we had reached a point abreast of the second section of palms called Lughaf, we were met by a deputation headed by the *Amir* of Nu'aima, in response to whose cordial welcome and pressing invitation to honour his village with our presence pending the settlement of our difficulties with the people of Dam—an invitation which he reinforced with the information that a hostile picket was still lurking in an *Ithil* patch farther on—we decided once more to break our journey and soon found ourselves encamped outside the walled hamlet of Nu'aima. To me this decision was doubly welcome, inasmuch as it gave me an opportunity, which might not recur, of examining the eastern section of the oasis at leisure and of seeing something of its obviously hospitable folk.

On the arrival of Ibn Jilham—a familiar figure in these parts—a protracted discussion had, it appeared, taken place, with the result that the people of Dam, loudly protesting that such a course involved them in no moral responsibility for the regrettable lapse of the authorities, withdrew their opposition and called in their pickets from Sharafa.

Less accommodating counsels had, however, prevailed during the night and the decision of the day being regretted and rescinded, the Dam hotheads had announced that they would not let me pass their town and had picketed the immediate approaches thereto. The *Amir*, a weak and worthless individual according to report, had handled the new situation with characteristic lack of decision, and was known to be at heart in sympathy with the fanatics, whom in a letter to Ibrahim he declared himself unable to control; while the *Qadhi*, one 'Abdul'aziz ibn Bishr, a native of Riyadh, had apparently secretly encouraged the turbulent element in its obstinacy and had at any rate left no room for doubt as to his real feelings by withdrawing overnight into the desert in order to avoid responsibility, either for the desecration of his cure by my presence or for the consequences of armed resistance to my entry.

We had at any rate broken the ice by entering the Wadi, and were for the time being among friends, but our prospects of further progress were still far from rosy and gave Ibrahim and his fellows much food for thought. The fire of criticism, which his lack of finesse in handling the Sulaiyil affair had evoked, appeared to have upset his mental equilibrium, and, it must be admitted, he was feeling an overburdening sense of responsibility for my personal safety. The result was a wavering between pusillanimity and bravado, which might have been disastrous, had not the counsel of wiser men prevailed. His first idea was that we should withdraw in a body from the Wadi to a safe refuge in the Tuwaiq highlands, whence, temporarily secure, to send to Ibn Sa'ud for help and to threaten the people of Dam with their monarch's dire displeasure. I did not hear of this ridiculous proposal until it had been effectively quashed by the unanimous condemnation of Ibn Jilham and our other leaders; their determination not to quail before the Dam challenge and to advance at all costs after warning the people concerned of the inevitable consequences of further opposition was warmly supported by the *Amir* of Nu'aima, whose motives were largely doubtless of a political nature, inasmuch as he foresaw in the impending crisis a means of raising himself in Ibn Sa'ud's estimation at the expense of

his local rivals. In fact local jealousies and animosities were our surest guarantee of safety. This decision having been arrived at, three letters were despatched to the enemy camp; two of them conveyed to the *Amir* and the *Qadhi* respectively a clear warning that their weakness in dealing with the unruly mob they were supposed to control could not but bring down upon them the wrath of their master and an intimation that they would be held directly responsible for any unpleasantness that might occur on the morrow, when we proposed to resume our advance; while the third letter, couched in the strongest terms, was addressed to the people of Dam itself accepting their challenge, announcing our intention of continuing our march and warning them that their town would be razed to the ground by Ibn Sa'ud if they did not at once withdraw their opposition and send responsible representatives to accompany us to the *Amir's* palace. We anxiously awaited the result of these letters, to which replies came late in the afternoon from the *Amir* and the Dam Council—the *Qadhi* having evaded service by taking a holiday in the desert; the former assured us that the trouble was over and that we might go on with perfect confidence, while the culprits themselves expressed contrition for the attitude they had adopted, begged forgiveness and assured us that we might pass on to our destination without fear of any let or hindrance on their part. The Arab's bark is notoriously worse than his bite, but we were taken aback by the completeness of the surrender. All was well provided no change of attitude occurred during the night, and all we had to guard against was possible treachery and individual fanaticism. We did not, however, relax—on the contrary we redoubled—our precautions; pickets were stationed all night round our camp to guard against a surprise attack and I was asked to extinguish my light at an early hour and to close down my tent flaps before lying down to sleep; fortunately it was a beautifully cool night undisturbed by any untoward occurrence.

Immediately on our arrival at Nu'aima we were bidden to his house for coffee by Faisal ibn Suwailim, the friendly *Amir* or rather acting-*Amir*, for the permanent incumbent of that office, Mihmas ibn Suwailim, was at the moment

absent with the *Badawin* portion of the Buraik—a section of the Musa'ara group of Dawasir—of which he is the head. Faisal and his younger brother, Hidhlul, who helped to entertain us, are cousins of Mihmas and had been left by him in charge of the village pending his return. We gained admission to their residence through a mere hole, scarcely two feet high, in the circuit wall of the village and sat imbibing coffee in a dingy parlour, more like a passage than a room and about twenty feet long and only four broad. Later in the day the pair joined us at our morning meal, during which a crowd of the village children gathered round us at a respectful distance, and in turn bade us to dinner at their cousin's, the *Amir's*, house. This was situated in the middle of the village at the end of a street leading from its only real gate—a dozen or so apertures in other parts of the circuit wall being of the same description as that by which we entered Faisal's house and giving like it direct admission into the various houses. These apertures are closed at night by brushwood obstacles to keep out thieves and enemies. The meat consumed at the evening meal was provided by ourselves, as at this season the sheep were all away at the pastures and could not be purchased in the Wadi, and the foundation of the great dish placed before us was steaming, sopped bread in place of the equally unobtainable rice. Low indeed is the standard of living among the Dawasir, whose staple diet consists of dates, milk and sodden bread, occasionally varied by wheaten porridge.

During the afternoon accompanied by a strong escort I made a tour of the Lughaf or Misa'ara section of the oasis, which, divided by broad clearings about half a mile in width from the Sharafa plantations on the east and the central section on the west, comprises a dense mass of palms partly in and partly on the left bank of the *Wadi* depression and contains five hamlets of which two are almost wholly in ruins. Nu'aima and Qu'aiz situated close together on the bare and gentle slope of the right bank are petty walled hamlets containing populations of about 400 and 300 souls respectively; the people of the latter like their *Shaikh*, Faihan ibn Quwaid, are of the Albu Hasan section of the Misa'ara. About a quarter-mile to the north of these two

and at the foot of the left bank slope, where the palm-belt forms a containing angle, lies the small unwalled hamlet of Nazwa inhabited by another Misa'ara section, the Albu Sabban, about 300 souls in all under Shuja' ibn Khuraim, their chief. Close to it downstream but in the bed of the valley lie the remnants of Darsa, a hamlet of Al Hanabija, a small subsection of the Shakara section of the Hasan group; they constitute a relic of the first Dawasir invasion, which had survived the vicissitudes of fortune in the midst of their quarrelsome and hostile fellow-tribesmen until the year preceding my visit, when they were swept out of existence by the flood. 'With the exception of a sorry remnant of some thirty souls living in scattered huts, they then migrated to join their relatives in the Aflaj, leaving the ruins of their little hamlet and the stumps of their palms to bear witness to God's handiwork and man's. Over against these ruins on the right bank lie the remnants of Ruwaisa, amid which some twenty survivors of an old colony of Amur [1] still drag out a miserable existence cultivating a small area of corn-land until such time as their Misa'ara neighbours may decide to appropriate it to themselves. A sorry tale of strife and misery is that of the Lughaf—an epitome of Dawasir history.

The Sharafa settlement east of the Lughaf is a straggling palm-strip with some excellent groves and a good deal of *Ithil*—at this time in bloom—and is inhabited by some 500 souls of an independent section of Dawasir, from which it takes its name and which is regarded as being nearly akin to the Misa'ara—some consider it a section of this group. This population resides in the main unwalled hamlet of Mishrif, a smaller one in two sections called 'Uwaidhat and several scattered *Qasrs*,[2] the whole community acknowledging the rule of its chief *Shaikh*, Misfir ibn Hidhlul, who happened at this time to be absent on a visit to Riyadh.

[1] The main body of the Amur migrated to Tamra and the Hanabija to Hamar in upland Aflaj; a ruined *Qasr* in the open space between the Lughaf and Sharafa sections is said to have been the residence of an *Amri* notable of the past, named Hamad ibn Jibal.

[2] The chief of these are those of Maradih and Mansur at the western extremity of the section and Thamamiyya (*Qasr* and well) in the centre.

I was woken betimes on the following day, May 30, our tents were struck and packed, and by dawn everything was ready for a start. "In the keeping of God!" said our host; and we replied: "May God requite you!" We mounted and set forth on the short last stage of our march, taking the precaution of riding in close array with rifles held ready for use, for though the assurances we had received relieved us of much anxiety, it was always possible that some indiscretion on either side might involve us in unexpected consequences. Preceded by two horsemen of the governor's following acting as scouts we soon cleared the Misa'ara section and found ourselves abreast of the first palms of the central section some three-quarters of a mile to our right; the sandy plain, which we had hitherto traversed, now gave way, on the right bank of the *Wadi*, to a wide expanse of gravel rising to a low ridge, whose northern flank overlooked the *Wadi* bed and the town of Dam itself, whose mud walls were now visible not far ahead. About a quarter-mile to our left on the edge of the sand lay the miserable little unwalled and dilapidated hamlet of Ma'tala, inhabited only by some 200 negro tenants of the Mukharim, an independent and apparently wholly nomadic section of the Dawasir—owners of the rich palm-groves in face of the hamlet, around which were strewn the signs of their harvest-time encampments. This section, reputed to be 2000 strong including no less than 200 horsemen, scorns to live in settled habitations and prefers to roam the deserts with its herds and flocks, coming in only at the date season to reap the benefits of their tenants' industry.

A number of ruined *Qasrs* on the plain between Ma'tala and the palm-belt suggested more settled habits in the past, but no explanation was vouchsafed to me of the change which has taken place; it was certainly not due to any weakness of the section which seems to enjoy a high reputation in the Wadi for valour. The next settlement we passed, Muqabil, was similar to Ma'tala but smaller and nearer the palm-belt; some fifty negro tenants occupy it on behalf of *Badawin* owners, the Dha'luq subsection of the Rijban.

Scarcely a mile of open plain now intervened between us

and the walls of Dam itself, which loomed larger and larger before us through the morning haze. "*Idhkar Allah!*" ejaculated the more pious among us as we closed in for the final ordeal. On we marched without haste, the two horsemen well in front; the housetops were dotted with dark figures of spectators gathered to view the passage of the infidel. Of a sudden two suspicious characters issued from the town wall running towards a detached ruin some way ahead, and our scouts darted off in pursuit to turn them back. A temporary panic ensued among us as unwittingly we stumbled into an ill-kept cemetery close to the south-east corner of the town; we stumbled out of it again as best we might, hoping that our indiscretion had not been remarked. In a moment we were abreast of the town and for five minutes—five minutes of the acutest tension I have ever experienced—we marched in grim silence along its southern wall under the sullen glare of its assembled people, knowing that the cry of a single fanatic or a madman's shot might precipitate a crisis in face of which, commanded as we were by every roof, we should have been powerless. Long will those age-long moments live in my memory and long the murmur of relief which escaped my companions as we reached the end of the wall, and passing across the narrow open space between the towns of Dam and Mishrif, couched our camels before the gate of the Barzan, the fort-like palace of the governor of Wadi Dawasir.

'Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Mu'ammar, a native of the Qasim [1] and cousin of Fahad ibn Mu'ammar, governor of that province, received us at the entrance to his palace with a courtly greeting and evident relief and immediately conducted us into a large audience-chamber on the right-hand side of the vestibule, where he bade us be seated and partake of coffee. A gentle-mannered, mild-spirited, easy-going man of middle age and somewhat more than middle height, he impressed me very favourably from the beginning in spite of all I had heard to his disadvantage, and of his narrow, typically *Najdi* features, betokening a combination of ignorance and prejudice. He was indeed an utterly

[1] The Mu'ammar family is actually of 'Aridh origin and is descended from the former Princes of 'Ayaina in Wadi Hanifa.

unsuitable person for the important office, in which nearly two years before he had succeeded Sa'd ibn Affaisan on the latter's transfer to the Aflaj, for not only was he entirely lacking in the strength and decision necessary for the proper governance of a turbulent tribe and province, but he was deeply imbued with the tenets of the *Ikhwan* and therefore naturally predisposed to sympathise with the more fanatical elements of his charge to the prejudice of law and order. He was certainly not master in his own house, as Ibn Affaisan was, and to his credit be it said, he had no ambition but to retire into private life and devote himself to spiritual matters.

At the time of our arrival the governor had been engaged in the transaction of official business in public audience and a large and varied company was gathered together in the audience-chamber when we entered. Business was suspended and I was conducted to the seat of honour near the hearth and next to the governor's place, the man who made way for me being Sum'an ibn Matraha, chief of the Rashid section of the 'Arqa, a ferocious, broad-browed, broad-chested bandit of Najran, who had recently come up in connection with a suit pending between his own and another section, the Fahhad, and was about to visit Riyadh with a following of five wild-eyed, fair-skinned and ill-clad highlanders, whose features and dress alike proclaimed them to be foreigners. They wore naught but a plain head-kerchief and a short and very dirty white smock gathered in at the waist by a well-filled bandolier with a curved dagger-sheath of ornamental metal-work stuck into it at one side. The representatives of the Fahhad section had preceded their rivals to Riyadh and one of them, only recently returned thence, an uncouth *Baduwi* named Bulaih, was also of the company, which among many others included a very effeminate young man of extraordinarily sensual appearance, a mere boy of about fifteen or sixteen, whose insolently confident bearing at the hearth, over which he appeared to be presiding, proclaimed him a person of some consequence and whose speech betrayed him as a budding *Mutawwa'*.

At first 'Abdullah seemed somewhat disinclined to

converse with me, but I had little compunction, knowing that he himself was largely to blame for the troubles which had preceded our arrival, in forcing myself upon him, with the result that his reserve soon thawed and we got on very well together. But for the time being the centre of the stage was occupied to the exclusion of all others by Ibrahim, who was not going to miss so good and so public an occasion for giving vent to the righteous indignation he felt against the outrageous conduct of the people of Dam and than whom I know no one in all Arabia to whose lips the catchwords of *Wahhabi* puritanism flow more easily from a heart which, to say the least, was by *Wahhabi* standards a sink of iniquity. Practising in strict privacy that which he condemned in public, he posed ever as a model of respectability, and in that capacity never lost an opportunity of preaching virtue as interpreted by himself. On this occasion his theme was the enormity of which Dam had been guilty in challenging the commands of Ibn Sa'ud and, viewed from that aspect, the case, which he developed at the top of his voice with a martial air and much beating of his stick upon the dusty floor, was unanswerable though his arguments were flimsy; his tirade was listened to in silence and did not seem to produce much effect on his audience, whose opinions were, it seemed to me, adequately voiced by 'Abdullah, when he declared that, as nothing untoward had actually happened, there was no occasion for further labouring the matter.

Thus we sat for nearly two hours awaiting the breakfast which the governor had prepared for us. Introductions had been dispensed with on our arrival but, as I became more accustomed to the atmosphere of the assembly, I introduced myself to Sum'an by enquiring of Tami who and what he was. "Ibn Sa'ud," growled the old robber when the necessary explanation had passed, "*ghassabna 'ala shaufatak*—Ibn Sa'ud has forced us to look upon you, but had it been otherwise we had rather slit your weasand," and he drew his horny forefinger suggestively across his throat. "Our people in Najran," he continued, "would have killed you without hesitation, but we are servants of Ibn Sa'ud." "I am very glad to make your acquaintance," I replied, "and if it be true that you are going soon to Riyadh I hope

that you and your companions will accompany us on our return." To this proposal he readily assented, and by the evening the prospect of enriching himself at my expense had made him very friendly; at any rate he sat next to me during the evening meal and afterwards for the coffee-drinking and when, thinking I knew him well enough to risk the familiarity, I ventured to admire the handsome jewelled *Janbiyya* or dagger at his belt, he drew it out and handed it to me. "It is yours," he said; "and what will you give me in return?" I laughed the matter off and returned the weapon—a handsome specimen of Hadhramaut work with an agate-studded hilt and sheath of thin ornamental gold work—with hopes, unfortunately never realised, of effecting a suitable bargain later on.

The trouble which had brought the representatives of the Rashid and Fahhad sections to the court of Ibn Sa'ud's deputy in the Wadi—incidentally this fact was a striking indication of a great southward and apparently fairly recent extension of Ibn Sa'ud's influence—was a recent encounter between the two in which the Rashid had killed nine men of the Fahhad and had captured several camels. The latter as plaintiffs had immediately sent a deputation to Riyadh, which, being bidden to submit the case to the *Amir* of the Wadi, had just arrived back—the main body in point of fact arrived the day after us—to find a deputation of their rivals arrived from the south to present their case. The pleas of both parties were heard by the *Amir* during the days of our sojourn in the Barzan and on the day preceding our departure a settlement was arrived at, by which Sum'an on behalf of his section agreed to pay 600 dollars in respect of the captured camels, and 800 dollars in respect of every man killed—a total payment of nearly 8000 dollars, which is a large sum for a *Badawin* tribe to pay up. Sum'an naturally hoped to receive some contribution towards this payment from me and I made it clear that he would do so by accompanying us on the return journey, but the settlement of the case rendered it unnecessary for him to undertake the journey to Riyadh and our provisional contract fell through. Nevertheless he came to me on the day of our departure to ask for the money, and showed no ill-will when I explained

that I was under no obligation to pay it. His company on the return journey would have been very welcome, and I greatly regretted his inability to join us.

For seven days in all until the afternoon of 5th June we sojourned as guests of 'Abdullah ibn Mu'ammar in the Barzan, a great square fort completed barely a year before and situated in the open space between the rival towns of Dam and Mishrif—somewhat nearer the latter—in such wise that its lofty walls of ruddy clay and its four tall corner turrets completely commanded both. Considering the political circumstances of the Wadi and the factious spirit of the Dawasir, which makes the maintenance of peace a task of no little difficulty, the site chosen for the residence of the governor seemed to me ideal and far more suitable than that of the forts, now ruined, erected by Ibn Sa'ud's predecessors as the centres of their authority. The oldest fort is that called Bahja, whose ruins lie about a quarter-mile south of Dam and date back apparently to the early part of last century or perhaps even to the reign of the great Sa'ud; however that may be, its decay seems to have been contemporaneous with the period of anarchy which marked the Turkish occupation of Upper Najd after the capture and destruction of Dara'iyya. The next monarch of the house of Sa'ud to assert his authority over the Wadi was Faisal, who built a great fortress called Abu Tauq—perhaps on account of the moat which still encircles its ponderous ruins, half masonry and half clay—close to the east wall of the capital. This in turn was reduced to the state of its predecessor by the disorders to which the whole of the southern provinces was a prey between the reigns of Faisal and his grandson, the present ruler.

The interior of the Barzan, which has but a single gate on the north side, consists of a spacious courtyard surrounded by living rooms and stables; on the right of the vestibule is the great audience-chamber, whose length is about two-thirds of the outer wall and whose floor is spread with a thick carpet of fine sand; on its other side is a small and somewhat dingy mosque, on whose roof is a small apartment—apparently a private audience-chamber—which was placed at my disposal during these days, although the only approach

to it was a flight of steps leading up directly from the open court of the mosque. The *Amir's* private quarters occupied the greater part of the eastern wall, on which side also were the guest-room and kitchen, and part of the southern, while the remaining buildings were stables; in a corner of the courtyard was a well, and adjoining the audience-chamber was an enclosure surrounded by a low mud parapet and provided with a coffee-hearth, for at all times, when the sun is not shining into the courtyard, the *Amir* and his visitors gather here to gossip over their coffee-cups.

The governor according to custom entertained us very sumptuously at both the midday and evening meals, the latter being served in the enclosure above mentioned and consisting of mutton and sodden bread piled up on large flat circular trays. Knowing, however, the difficulties incidental to catering in the locality and having still some left of the sheep we had purchased at Sulaiyil, I instructed Ibrahim to beg the *Amir* to let us cater for ourselves, and this we did for the rest of our stay, except only on the last night when our host again insisted on entertaining us at a farewell banquet. Sum'an and his followers readily gave us the pleasure of their company at all meals, and I must admit that I conceived a great affection for the uncouth old ruffian, who had an extraordinary knack of always saying the wrong thing simply because he always blurted out whatever thought was uppermost in his strange mind, always bellowing his sentiments into my ear in tones that would have done credit to a bull, as if I and every one else were stone deaf. "Why," he roared at me on one occasion, "do you not pray like the *Muslimin*?" but Tami covered my embarrassment with a ready jest and changed the subject. Sum'an had never seen the sea or even visited San'a, but he knew the deserts around Najran as well as most men.

From the Abu Huwail ridge, so called from the ruined fort of Huwail at its western extremity and lying about a quarter-mile to the south of the Barzan parallel to the right bank of the *Wadi*, I obtained on the first evening of my sojourn an extensive view of the whole oasis and its surroundings. Immediately below us and separated from each

other by short intervals lay the three townlets of Dam, Mishrif and Sabha along the southern edge of the channel, which parted them from the great palm-blocks belonging to each of them on the farther side. Westward of these and upstream lay the scattered and straggling hamlets, palm-groves and *Ithil* patches of the Fara'a or western section of the oasis, whose length from end to end—excluding the uninhabited *Ithil* and *Rak* plantations of Ghaif and Raka—is about seven miles. Through it runs the flood channel of Wadi Dawasir, whose bed of clay was in parts covered with a thin coat of *Rimdh* bushes and grass and in parts bare and sun-cracked. Around on every side lay boundless desert—a rolling waste of ruddy sand-waves extending to the northern horizon from the very edge of the palm-belt, on which in many places it has encroached considerably within living memory, burying the sites of former groves and hamlets, Ma'aidhar between the Lughaf and Mukharim sections and Mijraniyya and Qurariyya between the central and western sections, of which they say that not more than thirty-five or forty years ago they were the scenes of much cultivation.

Southward stretched a desert of gravel and grit, dotted profusely with low hummocks and ridges and shading away into sand, on the one hand to the south-east, in which direction a broad band of sand-dunes lies between it and the distant but still visible wall of Tuwaiq, and on the other hand to the west and north-west, where between it and the northern sand-waste the *Wadi* channel flows down through a light sandy plain from the north-west. Afar off in this direction I saw an outpost of the western mountain range, the rugged granite-mass of Raiyaniyya towering, if they spoke true, above the junction of the three great *Wadis*, whose confluence in a wide depression called Al Hajla forms the head of Wadi Dawasir. Descending from the mountains in which they rise, the mighty torrents of Tathlith, Bisha and Ranya are said to approach their junction round the flanks of Raiyaniyya from south-west, west-south-west, and north-west respectively, pouring their floods into the Hajla basin, where, barred on the east side by a thick barrier of heavy sand twenty miles broad or more, the gathered waters sink

impotently into the soil. Even so does the sand-belt of 'Arq al Subai'[1] farther north stem the floods of Wadi Subai', and it seems to me not improbable—though this cannot be asserted with confidence—that that sand-belt is but a northerly continuation of the *Wadi* barrier, and that the whole is an arm of the great southern desert itself.

Never in human memory had water been known to flow in the channel of Wadi Dawasir until the month of *Ramdhan* barely twelve months before my visit, when the pent-up flood of the triple torrent or rather of the Tathlith alone, for according to local report it was in that channel that the volume of rushing water, perhaps due to a local cloud-burst, was greatest, burst through the barrier of sand and poured in headlong course down its long-deserted bed across the desert. Afar off in the Wadi they heard the roar of the rushing stream, and the first trickle of the approaching waters reached the outskirts of the oasis in the evening. "The flood! the flood is upon us!" cried one, bursting like one demented into the audience-chamber, where the *Amir* was seated with his guests sipping coffee after the sunset prayer. "Hand me a cup," laughed the *Amir*, mocking, "quick, hand me a cup that I may drink up the flood ere it run dry!" But the flood came on and by noon of next day the valley was filled with the eddying waters of a flowing stream; for the first three days it grew apace reaching to a point beyond the bushes of Raka; thereafter the flow, which continued for another four days, grew feebler; and then it stopped, leaving a lake to cheer the hearts of men, who had never before seen water in that place. For nearly two months they drank of the torrent water from pools and ponds in the valley bottom, and the year of the flood will long be a date to reckon by in the annals of the Wadi. Great was the havoc wrought by the flood especially in the Tathlith valley, where shepherds, caught unawares with their flocks and herds, were swept away by the merciless stream, whose victims were reckoned at 150 human beings, 450 camels and countless sheep; in the oasis itself there was no loss of life, but numerous wells were wrecked beyond recognition and the Hanabija hamlet

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 163.

ceased to exist. In some respects this damage was compensated by a marked improvement in the water-level as well as in the quality of the water in the oasis, while a curious after-effect of the flood was an outcrop of castor-oil plants, which, I was assured, had never been known in the Wadi before—though I had noticed some at Sulaiyil [1]—and were believed to have grown from seeds or seedlings brought down by the torrent from the mountains. A few weeks before our coming rumours of a second flood had caused some anxiety in the Wadi, but on this occasion the Tathlith being again responsible for a more than normal flood, the waters had not been able to force a passage through the sand-belt and the Dawasir channel had not been affected.

I was extremely anxious to explore beyond the limits of the oasis up the *Wadi* depression if possible to its head at the foot of Raiyaniyya, but nothing would induce Ibrahim to sanction such an undertaking, and fairly circumstantial tales of marauding bands compelled me to bow to his decision. On one occasion, however, having gone out for a short excursion with a small party which did not include Ibrahim, I took advantage of his absence to reconnoitre in the desired direction on the pretext of taking bearings from certain hillocks a little way out on the southern plain. Having reached the most westerly of these, a mound called Al Mutai'an, I insisted on returning by way of a clump of conspicuous *Ghadha* bushes well to the west of the extremity of the oasis and in the bed of the channel. My companions were somewhat perturbed at my decision and we advanced with scouts out ahead; just as they reached the channel they signalled to us to halt, and it transpired that they had come upon the tracks of fifteen raiders going in the direction of the oasis. From the freshness of the tracks it was judged that they had passed at dawn or slightly before, in which case there seemed every prospect of our falling in with them on their return; a few steps farther, however, our fears were set at rest by the sight of the fresh tracks of the fifteen returning westward. Tuwairish and three others now proceeded cautiously on foot to the summit of a sand-ridge

[1] These may have been similarly brought down from the Tuwaiq uplands by the Majma' torrents.

on the farther bank of the channel to spy out the land while we awaited their report under cover; no sooner had they got to the top than they observed not far off three camel-riders, obviously part of the robber gang, and we came to the conclusion that the rest of the gang must probably be encamped in a fold of the sand-ridges. That was enough for us; they were fifteen and well mounted, while we were fourteen mounted on only eight *Dhaluls*. We turned homewards moving as fast as we could, but Tuwairish and his fellows dallied behind to fire a few long shots at the enemy, whereafter they galloped after us singing martial songs, and evidently well pleased with an exhibition of valour which might have had serious consequences had the rest of the gang been really near enough to pursue us. However, we reached the shelter of the Fara'a palm-groves in safety and that was the end of my schemes for a more ambitious excursion. The predatory bands, which infest the desert between the Wadi and the oases of the highlands—Bisha, Tathlith, and Ranya—were mostly, they said, of the Rizq and Sulum sections of the Yam tribe and very bold they were on occasion, for often they would come right down to the oasis itself under cover of night to draw water for themselves and their beasts and be off again before the break of dawn.

My arrival at the Barzan being an accomplished fact, we hoped that the agitation which had preceded our coming would subside without any further ebullition, but we reckoned in ignorance of the real character of the people of Dam, among whom a violent reaction took place on the evening of our first day against the tame acquiescence of their leaders in the admission of an infidel into their midst. Next morning, while I was dressing with the idea of strolling out to the neighbouring palm-groves, Ibn Jilham appeared with a suggestion that I might like to survey the scene from the top of one of the turrets and, readily agreeing to his proposal, I followed him. As I mounted the ladder I was a little disgusted at being welcomed at the top by Ibrahim, but found to my intense surprise that he was not alone and that his companion was the *Amir* himself. The latter greeted me most affably and proceeded at great pains

to point out to me the various settlements and landmarks of the oasis; after a few moments Ibrahim withdrew and the *Amir* begged me to be seated as he wished to talk over a matter of great importance. He had received a warning that, the people of Dam having repented of their submission to his orders, certain individuals had declared their intention of rectifying matters in their own way; according to their beliefs the despatch of an infidel was a sure passport to Paradise and, though he had made it widely known that any attempt upon me would be followed by the direst consequences for the whole town, he felt a little nervous of the changed temper of its inhabitants and feared that some fanatical individual might be tempted to make a bid for salvation cost what it might. He begged me, therefore, to give up just for one day any plans I might have for excursions into the oasis, and assured me that matters would settle down rapidly once the people became accustomed to my presence in their territories; but I was on no account to leave the fort during the day and, that I might have every opportunity of feasting my eyes on the sights of the place, the turret was at my disposal when I cared to use it. The request was so obviously made in good faith and for good reasons that I acceded to it without hesitation and spent the day immured within the four walls of the fort, whose gate was kept closed and guarded inside and out all day, no one but approved persons being admitted. Certain conveniences not, however, being available on the premises, I found it necessary to issue forth now and then and was on such occasions not a little embarrassed by being shadowed by numerous scouts, who had orders not to leave me out of their sight. Insult was added to injury in a message addressed to my companions, informing them that their attendance at the midday congregational prayer—it was Friday—would not be acceptable; so they repaired to the mosque of Mishrif, which had the advantage of being closer at hand, while from my lofty perch in the turret I amused myself watching the maidens of the same town drawing water at a well close to the walls of the fort and its goatherds driving in their flocks in the gloaming to be milked. From next morning onwards I was free to wander where I would, the collapse of the

hostility of Dam being signalised by a message from its elders, who tendered an unqualified apology for their past conduct and begged us to send a deputation to celebrate the declaration of peace over their coffee-cups. The invitation was, I think rightly, interpreted as not including me, and on the following day, 2nd June, Ibrahim led a select party to the house of Ibn Dhariman, one of the leading merchants of the town, where after much argument and coffee-drinking a formal reconciliation was effected and the episode was finally closed. I have still in my possession as a memento of the affair an illiterate scribble giving the names of the ringleaders of the conspiracy.

The town of Dam, capital of the Wadi province, is situated on the bare slope of the right bank of the channel about half-way between its actual bed and the Abu Huwail ridge. Roughly rectangular in outline, about 500 yards in length and somewhat less in breadth, it overlies a low mound on whose summit stand most of the best houses, and was at one time surrounded by a stout wall of moderate height, which is now for the most part in ruins and through whose interstices in the absence of proper gateways admission into the town may be gained in a score of places. The best building is a fort-like mansion called Qasr Husaiyin and belonging to one of the local chiefs. There is no regular *Suq*, but a dozen or more scattered shops carry on the commercial activities of the community, comprising a population of some 3000 souls of the independent Rijban section, one of the strongest clans of the Dawasir. The houses of the town, as those of all the other Wadi settlements, are of mud-brick [1] and the palm-groves belonging to it are as fine and well-cared-for as any in the oasis.

The open space between Dam and its chief rival, Mishrif, more often called Al Khammasin, a section of the Wudda'in, which forms the greater part of its population of about 1500 souls, is occupied partly by the Barzan and partly by an extensive cemetery. Mishrif itself is the chief commercial centre of the oasis, having a regular *Suq*, not unlike that of Laila, of some thirty shops set round an exiguous square

[1] The bricks used in the central section of the oasis are of a striking ruddy colour, while elsewhere they are grey.

near the western gate. The circuit wall is in a better state of preservation than that of Dam, but is somewhat dilapidated on the east side, where there is an apology for a gateway. The town contains no buildings of any architectural pretensions, its streets are narrow and crooked, and many of its houses, especially at the north-east corner, are in ruins. I did not myself meet the *Amir* of the Khammasin, Muhammad ibn Sultan, who, however, distinguished himself by adopting a strongly favourable attitude towards us from the beginning and thereby incurring the onus of providing us with such necessaries as fodder and milk.

The Wullamin—another independent section—town of Sabha, a short distance to the north-west of Mishrif, adopted an attitude of passive objection to our presence, and thus escaped liability to provide for our wants as well as responsibility for any active opposition to our advent. Like its sister townlets it is partially walled though it is the smallest of the three and cannot contain more than 1000 inhabitants. Its palm-groves on the other side of the depression are known by the name of Usail and are of considerable density, being separated from those of Mishrif by a well called Al Furaikh. The Wullamin section comprises two subdivisions, one of which, Al Sa'd, is under Muhammad ibn Dara'an while Mubarak ibn 'Ali is the leader of the other, Al Tamim.

The western block of the oasis, an extensive tract of scattered palm-groves interspersed with *Ithil* coppices and cornfields, is generally known as Al Fara'a. Its chief settlement is a group of hamlets, collectively known as Al Hamra and mostly in ruins, situated on the right bank of the *Wadi* —the various wards being known by distinctive names, Huwaiza in ruins, Al Uwaimir north of it and inhabited by 300 persons of a section of that name, Al Hamid also in ruins, and Al Ma'anni held by a subsection of that name about 200 strong. Among the palm-groves are three other hamlets —Al Nahish and Al Jilal [1] close together with populations of 200 and 50 respectively, and Sirajī with 100 inhabitants of the Humaidhan, a subsection of the Uwaimir.

Estimates of population are necessarily tentative and

[1] A subsection of the Uwaimir; the *'Amir* of Al Nahish is 'Amir ibn Tami and that of Siraji one Maufi ibn 'Ubaid.

to be accepted with due reserve in considering a country like Arabia, whose peoples yet remain to be persuaded of the advantages of exact enumeration and, not unnaturally in the circumstances, regard enquiries tending in that direction as the presage of one of two evils, the only two evils which disturb the even tenor of their desert life — invasion by a foreign foe or the advent of a tax-gatherer. If we add to their natural reticence on such a subject an ingrained prejudice against taking any account of women and children and a pardonable tendency to exaggerate their military strength — Doughty with much reason suggested that a deduction of ninety *per cent* from native estimates of this character would give one a fair idea of the numbers in question—the difficulty of arriving at satisfactory estimates may be imagined. Nevertheless I have deemed it necessary to hazard estimates wherever possible, and I can only hope that by the exercise of due restraint on my imagination I have been able to arrive within measurable distance of the truth and have, if anything, fallen short rather than exceeded it. However that may be, the population of the Wadi oasis, excluding the nomad Mukharim, would according to my estimates seem to be about 9000 souls; of whom perhaps about 2000 may be classed as *'Abid* or negroes and the remaining 7000 as persons of Dawasir blood. This number may safely be doubled to include the nomad element of the tribesmen, which is at least equal in numbers to the settled portion, and to the resulting 14,000 must be added the 2000 souls of the wholly nomad Mukharim. We should not therefore, I think, be far wrong in estimating the total population dependent on the Wadi at 16,000 tribesmen and 2000 negroes, or 18,000 in all—an estimate which would probably shock the pride of the Dawasir themselves.

The history of the Wadi, the identity of its former inhabitants and the steps by which it came into the hands of its present occupants are somewhat obscure, but there seems to be little doubt that the Dawasir originally emanated from the Yaman, whence one Zayid al Maltub, the ancestor from whom all existing sections of the tribe trace a common descent, having some generations ago—how many we cannot

say—obtained permission from the rulers of the country to emigrate, came with a small following to settle in the Wadi among the people who then owned it. In course of time they increased and multiplied to such an extent that they were not only able to absorb or destroy their hosts, but were compelled to spread northwards into Najd, possessing themselves in turn of Sulaiyil, Aflaj and Kharj, where I have already noted the distribution of their colonies, and in due course of an enormous wedge of territory, whose base is Wadi Dawasir and whose thin end reaches to the confines of Hasa far away to the north-east. On the south they march with the Al Murra, whom they have pushed into the desolate wastes of the Empty Quarter, and on the north with the Qahtan, whose similar and possibly contemporaneous thrust towards the heart of Najd they have never allowed to encroach on their own domains, and with the Subai' and Suhul remnants, who have found a home in Eastern Najd. Who the old hosts, whose hospitality the Dawasir abused by usurping their birthright, were it is impossible to say with certainty, but it is at least, I think, permissible to conjecture that their surviving remnants are to be sought in the tribal group known as Abat Dawasir, which I have already mentioned in connection with Tamra, Kimida and Ruwaisa, and to which local reckoning assigns four existing branches—the Amur, who hold Tamra Kabkabiyya and the remnants of Ruwaisa; the Haqban who inhabit Kimida and are represented in the Wadi itself by scattered remnants; and the Mishawiyya and Khiyalat, both of whom have been driven, lock, stock and barrel, out of their ancestral domains and are now to be found only in the Hasa. The house of Zayid al Maltub broke up at an early date into two branches, Al Suhaib,[1] which comprises the Hasan, Misa'ara, Sharafa, Rijban and Mukharim groups; and Al Salim, which was further subdivided into two branches, Al Zayid now represented by the Uwaimir, Ma'anni and Nahish sections of Al Fara'a; and Al Ghanim, to which belong the Wudda'in and Wullamin groups. Such would seem to be the skeleton of the Dawasir tribe, whose numbers and territorial distribution entitle it to be con-

[1] Sections belonging to this branch are known collectively as Al Sahaba.

sidered one of the dominant tribal organisations of modern Arabia, the equal of Qahtan, 'Ataiba, Harb, Mutair, Shammar, and 'Anaza, the lords of the desert, and whose countless colonies in Upper Najd outside the limits of its recognised tribal sphere are the measure of its influence through past centuries on the moulding of the Arabia of to-day. Of this tribe's active participation in the pearl-fisheries of the Persian Gulf I have already given some indication, and it is here sufficient to signalise the presence of a flourishing Dawasir colony in the island of Bahrain and to recall to those who took part in the initial stages of the Mesopotamian campaign that the battle of Saniyya in November, 1914, was fought through the dense palm-groves of Dawasir on the Shatt al 'Arab. Offshoots of the tribe are also said to be found at various spots in the Persian coast-districts, and it may well be that the wide distribution of its settled colonies has contributed materially to the erroneous impression that the tribe "has almost ceased to be Bedouin," as is stated in the official handbook which I have already quoted on several occasions. The Dawasir are pre-eminently *Badawin* within the limits of their tribal area, and their great expansion beyond those limits is but proof of the great part they have played in Arabian history through a long period, whose beginnings are lost in the mists of antiquity like the original name of the oasis, which they colonised under the name of Wadi Dawasir.

The agricultural products of the Wadi are in all respects similar to those of Sulaiyil and other oasis settlements of Southern Najd. Water is abundant in numerous wells of a depth of from four to five fathoms—before the flood it was appreciably lower—worked by camels, donkeys and kine. Dates and corn are the staple products; and there is much subsidiary cultivation of vegetables and fruit of the usual kinds. The standard of living is very low, meat, rice and tea being considered luxuries and rarely indulged in, while bread, milk, wheaten porridge, dates, coffee and *Qishr*, the last two, needless to say, from Yaman, constitute the daily bill of fare with little or no variation. The Treasury at Riyadh exacts a land-tax of 5 per cent in kind of the gross produce of dates and corn, while subsidiary cultivation

is exempt from taxation and is, indeed, treated as the perquisite of the tenants, when such are employed to cultivate the land for its owners, who are content to receive customary presents of fruit and vegetables in lieu of rent in addition to their half or two-thirds share of dates and corn. The proceeds of this tax for the year preceding my visit, when Ibn Jilham performed the duties of tax-collector, amounted to 46,000 *Waznas* of dates and 14,000 *Sa's* of corn in the Wadi (including Kimida) and 18,000 *Waznas* and 6000 *Sa's* respectively in Sulaiyil (including the Tamra settlements), while from Saih alone, in the Aflaj, on a basis of 10 per cent in respect of irrigation by flow and 5 per cent on well-irrigation, no less than 93,000 *Waznas* of dates were collected in the previous year. From these figures we may reckon a total produce of about 1,300,000 *Waznas* of dates and 400,000 *Sa's* of corn in the whole of the Wadi Dawasir settlements. At harvest time dates are sold to *Badawin* customers at fifteen *Waznas* per dollar, the normal average price at other times varying between seven and eight *Waznas* and three and a half and four *Sa's* in the case of corn. The money value of the land-taxes collected in the Wadi area during the year in question would be about 13,000 dollars or somewhat more than £2000—not a very substantial contribution to the central government, which, however, in the same year collected as much again on account of camel tax from the *Badawin* sections of the whole tribe.[1] This tax is levied at the rate of one sheep or goat per five camels and is taken in cash at the rate of five dollars per sheep or goat. The Maqran watering is the recognised centre for the annual camel assessment of the Dawasir, which on the occasion in question was conducted by Ibn Jilham—the net proceeds after payment of all expenses being some 15,000 dollars, representing perhaps a total camel population of about 20,000 animals for the tribe.

Apart from the one day of enforced confinement in the fort, the period of my sojourn passed pleasantly enough in longer or shorter excursions in and around the oasis,

[1] I think only the Aflaj and Wadi groups were in question, those of Kharj and the eastern pastures being separately dealt with.

in which I was usually accompanied by a select party of the more energetic of my companions and two or three representatives of the *Amir*. One of these, Sa'd by name, had made many journeys among the valleys of Tathlith, Bisha and Ranya generally on tax-collecting expeditions—though it was never clear to me how far Ibn Sa'ud's effective influence extended to westward of the Wadi itself—and by dint of much drawing on the sand and vague computation of marches by *Maqil* and *Marah*, terms used to denote the midday and evening halts respectively, was able to impart to me much information about those hitherto unexplored districts, about their oasis settlements, valleys and mountains, about the stages by which one approaches them from the east and about their positions in relation to each other. Another of the *Amir's* men was a fellow of very different character, an ill-bred half-caste—for such at least he seemed to me—named Ma'dha ; always insolent in manner and disobliging, he incurred the special dislike of Mitrak, and their ill-concealed mutual hostility came to a head on our way back from our attempted excursion up the *Wadi*. It was a very hot day and, not expecting anything like a long outing, my companions had omitted to take water with them ; our whole supply was that which my water-bottle contained, and this I had distributed to the others to overcome their disinclination to go as far as I wanted ; it was but little among thirteen and towards noon heat and thirst had seriously impaired the temper of our party. Just as we were passing the Hamra hamlets, where a small crowd had gathered to see us pass, it occurred to Ma'dha to quicken the pace, while Mitrak, rightly judging that haste might be misconstrued by the onlookers, but misjudging his man, called to him not to hurry. Ma'dha reined back in the worst of tempers, a few sharp words were exchanged between the two and, before I realised that anything serious was happening, the pair were circling round each other with upraised camel-sticks and volleys of trenchant abuse. Fearing that the onlookers might take advantage of the situation, I rode forward to intervene but, before I reached them, Ma'dha had drawn his revolver and Mitrak, spoiling for a fight, was endeavouring to unsling his rifle from the

back of his saddle. I now found myself between two fires, cursing both offenders volubly with all the language I could command, but for a while the scowling, vituperation and manœuvring went on regardless of me until, as in all Arab quarrels, the crisis was passed and the offenders relapsed into silence, broken by occasional soliloquies on each other's character—Mitrak, with a pointed '*Abd al aswad*', having the best of the exchanges. On arrival at the fort I directed Ibrahim to disarm the pair and lock them up without food or water until they had repented of their frowardness, and so they remained until the evening, when the pleadings of Tami, Ibn Jilham and others softened my heart and I consented to their release, not however without confiscating a *Dhalul* purchased by Mitrak for eighty dollars out of my bounty the previous day, and giving Ma'dha to understand that he had forfeited the gift which would have been his in other circumstances.

This untoward occurrence threw somewhat of a gloom over our party, but worse woe was yet in store for me before nightfall. On our way from Tamra to Kimida I had noticed the absence of Jabir the *Marri*, whose society I had been sedulously cultivating not without an ulterior motive—for I hoped some day with his connivance to traverse the Empty Quarter. In reply to my enquiries Ibrahim informed me somewhat curtly that he had sent him ahead to arrange for fodder against our arrival at the Wadi, and I had then made it clear that I wished him to be ever in personal attendance on me. On this particular morning I again noticed his absence from my escort and was greatly disturbed on hearing from Mitrak, whose information I did not altogether credit, that he had been sent back with letters. However, I made no remark on our return and awaited a suitable opportunity to elicit the facts; this occurred when the whole party, including Sum'an and his fellows, forgathered as usual after sunset in the open-air coffee-parlour. "Where is Jabir?" I then asked of Tami, who was sitting next to me; in a rambling answer, which reflected his uneasiness, he explained that it had been necessary to send Jabir back with letters to Riyadh. "What is this I hear?" I said, turning to Ibrahim; "is it true that Jabir is gone? Did I

not tell you the other day that I desired him to be always with me? Why have you done this thing?" He had done it deliberately to remove a man of whom he was jealous and to displease me. "I know my own business," he said doggedly, "and I am responsible to do that which seems best to me." "Never mind," I replied, "do as you wish always, but I stay not with you"; and I rose and left the assembly. An hour later, as I was sitting alone on the veranda in front of my room, Tuwairish appeared to announce that dinner was ready. "I want no dinner in such company," I replied; "but, Tuwairish, would you like a hundred dollars?" "Yes," he said, with the gleam which the mention of money will bring into the eyes of most Arabs. "Then mount without delay and ride after Jabir and bring him back; I will give you a hundred dollars when you return." His jaw fell; he knew he dared not do it and went away. Tami came up to argue in favour of dinner, which was getting cold, and Ibn Jilham followed with the same object; they failed and left me alone, dinnerless and full of wrath against him who had betrayed his trust. I afterwards learned that Jabir and 'Ubaid had been woken up at dead of night with orders to saddle up and be off without delay, as the letters—letters which I myself had handed unsuspectingly to Ibrahim before lying down to sleep—were very urgent and must be in Ibn Sa'ud's hands at the earliest possible moment; Jabir had protested but dared not disobey and had set out long before dawn. Greatly did I miss his impish laugh and wild savage ways during the following days, and months had passed before I again saw him; now, alas, he is dead—a victim to influenza—and the plans we made together will never be realised.

By this time we had been five days in the Wadi always awaiting the arrival of my baggage from Riyadh; my last film was exposed on Dam, and Rushaid had failed to find tobacco. Next morning, as I was having my tea, wondering what fruit the troubles of the previous day were to bring forth, who should appear but Ibrahim himself? "*Absharak biwusul turushina wa ghardhanak*," he said ("I bring you good tidings of the arrival of our messengers and your baggage"). "*Alhamdu lillah*," I replied, pretending to feel

no concern, while visions floated before my mind of films and tobacco for which I had waited so long. Ibrahim at any rate would not taste of my tobacco, and I gloated over the wistful look of repentance which had taken the place of yesterday's rebellious bravado. In due course the camels arrived and the packages were brought up; Ibrahim and others gathered round like hungry wolves, but I went on with my reading unconcernedly until one by one they melted away. Once left alone I fell upon the packages with eager impatience; they contained letters and newspapers in abundance and two large bottles of methylated spirits packed in quantities of sawdust, but not a scrap of tobacco and—worst of all—no films. I could have wept with rage. "Bad indeed are the good tidings borne by one accursed," I said to Tami later on, when he came to find how I had fared; "but, never mind, the curse of God upon Ibrahim and to-morrow we start from here." Surely Job in all his trials never suffered the agony I endured that day, as I sat alone reflecting that three hundred miles or more of country never seen of European eyes lay before me and that I had no films with which to picture it. Tami was very sorry; he had seen in the arrival of my baggage a means of effecting a reconciliation between Ibrahim and myself; and his hopes had been dashed to the ground. I breakfasted and dined alone.

Our camels did not come in from the pastures till somewhat late the following morning, so a start was postponed till the afternoon on the understanding that our first night would be spent at Raka. Overnight I had by the hand of Tami sent a fine mantle for the acceptance of 'Abdullah ibn Mu'ammar as a small token of my gratitude for his hospitality, but, to his credit be it said, he declined the gift, stating that he had need of nothing but that which God and Ibn Sa'ud might give him and begging to be excused for his apparent rudeness. This incident together with the dignified manner in which, while entertaining me in obedience to his master, he made it clear that the entertainment of an infidel was repugnant to his conscience, greatly impressed me in his favour and when, all being ready for a start, I went to take my leave of him I respected his feelings

by making my leave-taking as short as possible. "I am grateful to you," I said; "may God requite you!" "Give my respects to 'Abdul'aziz," he replied, and I went forth to mount my camel.

A week before we had arrived under the walls of Dam, marching delicately with a feeling that we were facing a crisis; but since then we had wandered freely about the oasis and my companions had twice been entertained in the town. We were no longer an object of any marked curiosity, and a few women on occasional housetops were the only spectators of our departure along the much dilapidated northern wall of Dam and through one of its outlying streets. We then continued along the right bank of the *Wadi* past Muqabil and Nu'aima, where some of my companions turned aside to bid farewell to the hospitable *Amir*, and then through the midst of the Sharafa settlement and along the *Wadi* bed beyond, past the *Ithils* of Ghaif to the bushes of Raka, whose pungent scent was wafted out to us by a light breeze long before we reached and couched our camels among them. The *Rak* bush is said to be peculiar to Southern Arabia and 'Uman, but occasional specimens are known at 'Uqair, in the Hasa province and in Kharj; its green twigs are in great demand as tooth-sticks, being chewed between the teeth or rubbed against them, while the bark of the trunk and stouter branches is commonly chewed, being hot to the taste and presumably used as a breath-purifier.

The climate of the Wadi during these days was extraordinarily mild. The prevailing wind seemed to be from the north and north-west, with occasional variations by easterly and southerly breezes, and was only on rare occasions strong enough to raise the sand. The daily variation of temperature was less than at Sulaiyil, for, though on one day the thermometer recorded as high a reading as 107°·6 Fahr., it seldom recorded more than 102°, and on two days the highest reading was just short of 99°; on the other hand the lowest reading was never less than 77°. North winds were accompanied by the greatest daily range, bringing the lowest temperatures at dawn and the highest in the afternoon, while southerly airs gave higher *minimum* readings and lower *maxima*. I was assured that the summer was now spent,

and that henceforth in the south the heat would steadily decline; if that assurance was justified Southern Najd is certainly to be congratulated on its climatic conditions, for which no doubt its high altitude, its dry atmosphere and its proximity to the monsoon zone of south-western Arabia are largely responsible.

We were not a little astonished on arrival at Raka to be greeted by one who had arrived walking from Tamra to announce that a second messenger from Riyadh had arrived at that place with letters and baggage and, having stopped awhile to rest his mount, would be with us on the following day. The news was almost too good to be true and I for one did not put too much faith in it, for I was weary with disappointed hope. I had not spoken to Ibrahim since the previous morning and a shadow was over us all. During the evening my tent was invaded by a monster deputation headed by Tami, Ibn Jilham and Mitrak who pleaded for forgiveness for Ibrahim; to tell the truth my prospect of visiting Hauta and Hariq on the return journey in spite of Ibn Sa'ud's express injunctions against doing so depended entirely on his goodwill and, Jabir's departure being now irrevocable, I was secretly not displeased to see how anxious everybody was for the re-establishment of good relations; after a long discussion I yielded and once more sat at the common board.

Next morning we were astir betimes and ready to welcome the expected messenger, who arrived at six o'clock, having covered the distance between Riyadh and the Wadi in seven days on a single camel carrying two large bags of mails and other things—an excellent performance; the previous messenger had taken thirteen days on the same journey. I lost no time in turning out the contents of the two bags which contained a large stock of cigars and cigarettes and a tin of kerosene oil but, alas, no films. We then breakfasted and dallied a little longer, while I indulged in a welcome cigar after nineteen tobacco-less days and read my mails—Ibrahim and Rushaid at the same time retiring behind a distant bush with a box of cigarettes which I made over to them. Among my letters was one which contained my first intimation of serious developments in the Khurma direction,

"the Sharif having apparently informed the authorities in Egypt that owing to Ibn Sa'ud's activities in that direction he had been obliged to send troops to restore order at Khurma. Some days later at Hamar I heard that the people of Khurma had sent to the Qahtan, the 'Ataiba *Ikhwan* of Rain in the Ardh district, and to Ghatghat for assistance, and that the call had been responded to with alacrity. I recorded at the time in my diary that a delicate situation would arise in the event of these rumours being true and might soon develop into a semi-religious war between Ibn Sa'ud and the King of the Hijaz. As a matter of fact the first engagement had already taken place on June 1, and the Sharif's punitive force had been worsted by the so-called rebels.

We now started off on our long return journey, striking out towards the distant wall of the Tuwaiq escarpment over a wide expanse of rolling sandy downs known as Al Qa'as. Here and there sandy knolls covered with *Rak* or *Ghadha* bushes broke the monotony of the landscape, many of them having distinctive names which I was able to record, thanks to Mubarak, a new guide we had picked up in the Wadi to supplement the ignorance of Tuwairish, who was quite useless. It was, I think, Mubarak who had walked in the previous day from Tamra with news of our coming baggage; he was a man of nearly fifty but full of energy and an oryx-hunter of considerable local repute with many a hunter's tale of days spent in the vast horizons of sand. He was of the Amur tribe.

One of the sand knolls, by which we passed, is known as Qauz al Hadida, apparently according to Mubarak, who would not, however, vouch for the truth of the story, because somewhere beneath its mass of sand lies a plate or block of metal, measuring so far as he could remember about three feet by two. The story perhaps refers to a meteorite, but I could ascertain no further particulars—the metal could at any rate, if it really is there, scarcely have been the work of human hands.

From this point onwards the sandy expanse, which for some distance had been quite flat except for the knolls and ridges which dotted its surface, merged imperceptibly

into a firm plain of fine black grit overlying a sandy soil, the sand like that of the Wadi area generally consisting of minute white crystals. The plain was treeless except for a solitary acacia by which we pitched our midday camp after a march of some twelve miles ; the Wadi had of course disappeared in our rear behind the sandy downs, but we had caught a fleeting glimpse on the way of Kimida some distance off on our right. Resuming our march over the same bare plain we rapidly approached the frowning barrier of Tuwaiq making for a headland called Khashm Kumaih, midway between Khashm Tirjim on the north, under which is a brackish *Mishash*, and Khashm Suwad on the north side of the Tamra gap. A broad strip of grassy plain runs north and south between the desert and the escarpment with a rich covering of *Nussi* and *Rimdh*, *Tarfa*, which is a sort of dwarf *Ithil*, and *Asal* ; this strip they call Haiya, a word much used in the south as a synonym of *Sail* or flood-channel, denoting thereby the fact that it serves on occasion, as indeed it must have done during the past spring, as a watercourse to convey the waters descending from the gullies of the escarpment into the main trough of Wadi Dawasir. A broad band of crisp white *Sabkha* runs down the middle of the strip marking the actual drainage channel. From it we followed up the pebbly torrent-bed of Sha'ib Kumaih and pitched our tents by its side at the foot of the sheer precipice of Tuwaiq.

On our way across the desert we had crossed some tracks of camels leading from north to south towards the Muqatil tract of southern Tuwaiq. "*Gom*," said one of our party, interpreting the tracks, "*wa richaïbhum arba' wa ma'hum radifain*," which being interpreted meant that a gang of raiders consisting of six men mounted on four. *Dhaluls* had passed that way ; they had gone, and we rode on congratulating ourselves that we were not likely to meet them. A few moments later we crossed some more camel tracks going in the opposite direction : "*Hashshashish*" ("Grass-cutters"), was the brief but decided conclusion of our experts, who, a moment later spying the tracks of a solitary man, dismissed the unknown stranger from their minds with a verdict of "*Qannas min Kimida*" ("Some hunter from

"Kimida out after gazelle"). And so we fell into a discussion of the tracker's art. It is perfectly amazing what tracks on the surface of the desert can convey to an Arab mind and with what rapidity and assurance they jump at sight to conclusions, which appear to be of the most complex character. Marching ever with their eyes alternately on the horizon and on the ground beneath them, they instinctively sum up the general characteristics of the country about them, and the character of the country contributes materially to the identification of the people who frequent it. Again the tracks of fast-moving *Dhaluls* or laden beasts of burden or grazing camels are distinctive enough to deceive no denizen of the desert. The freshness or otherwise of the tracks serve further to date the passage of the animals which made them. Thus is the ordinary Arab—and how much more so the expert ?—equipped with an almost instinctive power to read the signs of the desert, and well he needs to do so, who, travelling much, would save himself alive in the midst of foes. I gleaned from the conversation that, while a high degree of skill is the common heritage of all *Badawin* tribes, pride of place is generally conceded to the Al Murra of the Empty Quarter, who enjoy the reputation of being able to tell the colour of a camel by its tracks, colour and tread being constant factors in the many breeds of camel which the south produces. Dwellers in sandy wastes are generally credited with greater acuteness in this art than the inhabitants of the hard desert plains, and in the north the Sinjara Shammar enjoy a high reputation for the reading of tracks. "Some Arabs," said Mubarak, "were riding across a plain, when one of them, a *Shaikh* of the tribe, called the attention of his fellows to the tracks of his own daughter crossing their path in the direction of a strip of *Nafud* in the distance. 'There goes my daughter,' he said, 'to gather *Nussi* for the camels against our return.' They rode on and in the evening they returned, crossing the girl's returning tracks. 'Ah ! woe is me,' cried the *Shaikh*, 'see ye not that when she went forth this morning she was a virgin and now she is such no longer ? By God ! she shall die for her unchastity, and with her I will slay the man that has dishonoured her ; come help

me search him out, for his tracks are not with hers.' And so the party, greatly perturbed by the shame that had come upon the tribe, rode off towards the *Nafud* along the girl's tracks, searching for those of her paramour, but nowhere finding them; on they rode some distance into the sands until they came to where the tracks ended near by a desert plant, the curious *Tarthuth* vulgarly known as the Desert Penis—*Zubb al Hamad*; and the old *Shaikh* wept for joy to know that, though his reading of the tracks was right, he had wronged his daughter by his too ready suspicions and had wronged her more by keeping her so long unwed." The story lost nothing in its telling and was greeted with much applause. A more striking instance of the tracker's skill would be difficult to find—*si non è vero è ben trovato.*

5. The South Country

Time being short and my companions unwilling to adventure beyond the limits prescribed by Ibn Sa'ud, I had to rest content with what had been achieved and the hope of satisfying some day the insatiable craving within me to penetrate the recesses of that Empty Quarter, whose northern boundary I had now skirted along its whole length from east to west, from the Hasa to the Wadi. In all my wanderings I had only met with one man, my companion, Jabir ibn Faraj of the Suwaihit subsection of the Libhaih section of Al Murra, who claimed to have traversed the southern sands from north to south even to the Indian Ocean, and, though he was not alone on the three occasions on which he did so, I believe him to be the first human being of whom such a feat is credibly recorded. But the Murra are a little-known tribe and, though it is not to be supposed that they are addicted to crossing the inhospitable waterless waste between them and the sea for the mere pleasure of doing so or even for commercial reasons—for the Hasa market supplies them with all they can afford to buy—I gathered from Jabir that such excursions as those he himself had made are not reckoned serious interruptions of the ordinary day's work of the tribe, who from time imme-

'morial have been in the habit of paying surprise visits to their neighbours, the tribes of the southern littoral—the Wuhiba, the 'Awamir and the Duru'—and relieving them of their surplus camels, the highly prized *Farha* and *Safar* varieties of the '*Umaniyya* breed. Such visits are doubtless returned by the southerners as occasion arises, and I make no doubt that among them may be found men who have beheld the palms of Jabrin, the only fixed habitation of the Murra nomads.

When all is said and done, the Empty Quarter would seem to be far from justifying the lurid colours in which it has been painted by some European travellers and in which it is always painted by the Arabs of settled tracts, who have never been within view of it, though the crossing of it is an adventure not to be lightly undertaken by the uninitiated. On its southern and western borders impinge the tribes already mentioned, the tribes of the Hadhramaut and the Yam tribes of Najran, but by common consent the lords of the horizons of that sand-swept waste are the Al Murra,[1] a tribe which, like the 'Arqa, the Shamir, the Matara and the 'Ajman, is an offshoot of the Yam family. It has long severed its political connection with Najran and, marching along the whole of its northern boundary with the Dawasir, now owes a vague allegiance to Ibn Sa'ud by reason of its partial economic dependence on the province of Hasa—partial because such a tribe has need of little that the desert cannot supply, real need indeed of nothing but fodder for its camels and of that the Rub' al Khali is bountiful.

One of its seven main sections, the Bishr, whose leading *Shaikh*, 'Ali ibn Shuraim, *alias* 'Ali al Lahub, is acknowledged as the paramount chief of the whole tribe, inhabits the limestone plain astride the Sahaba channel between the Hasa and Jabrin. Another section, the Jabir, who alone do not recognise the lead of Al Lahub, holds the Jabrin oasis and the surrounding desert; while all the other sections centre round a tract named Al Khiran in the midst of the Empty Quarter except the Dimnan, whose scattered subsections are found partly in the Khiran, partly on the borders of the

[1] They trace their descent to 'Ali al Murra.

Hadhramaut and partly over against Najran. The Libhaih based on Al Khiran roam the eastern spaces of the desert between Hasa and Qatar on the north and 'Uman on the south. At a low estimate the territorial expanse of the tribe must be about a quarter-million square miles of desolation.

Some four or five days' journey, or about 150 miles south of the Hasa across a limestone plain similar to the steppe desert between the Hasa and the Dahana, lies the oasis of Jabrin, a palm tract comparable in size though not in density or fertility to the Hasa itself, in a shallow valley between two low ridges. So far as I could gather there are no villages or permanent habitations in the tract, but only a few mud huts and wells, round which the tribesmen gather at rare intervals and more particularly at the date harvest, for the groves, unwatered and untended, yield a rich crop of naturally fertilised dates year by year to their improvident owners, who, fearful of the mosquitoes and unhealthy climate of the valley, prefer to eke out their existence in the company of their camels in the midst of the desert. On these occasions the camels are left behind in the pastures with a few herdsmen to look after them, while the rest of the tribe, man, woman and child, troops in to the oasis to glut itself on the fresh fruit of the palms and to collect a store for the following twelvemonth. It is only on such occasions that this desert tribe is really vulnerable and that flying expeditions are launched against it either by their tribal enemies or by the governor of the Hasa who is generally responsible for the administration of this area; for the rest of the year they are practically immune to attack in the fastnesses of their sandgirt stronghold.

At a point about fifty miles north of Jabrin the Hasa road crosses the broad depression of the Sahaba, which after leaving Yamama in Kharj runs by way of the wells of Wasi'a to the Dahana; hence for about twenty miles its course is buried though apparently not altogether obliterated by sand and thereafter is easily traceable across the limestone desert past its junction with Wadi Faruq to within measurable distance of the Persian Gulf, into which, in the old days of its being a functioning watercourse, it used to spill, they say, in the neighbourhood of the base of the

Qatar promontory. In its bed near the crossing of the Hasa road are four wells—Al Khin with a small palm-grove by its side, Al Haradh and two others.

A day's journey south of Jabrin begins the Great Sand Desert, separated from the Biyadh by a flat bare plain called Haraisan and from Sulaiyil by the Farsha tract, and in its midst, fifteen days' journey farther on according to report and somewhat east of south, lies the extensive sandy tract, which they call Al Khiran owing to the presence therein of scattered wells or pools of briny water. Here is the hom of the great bulk of Al Murra, where, camped in scattered groups about the water, the tribesmen lead a life as lean and wild as anything one can imagine. The great droves of camels are watered, milked and then driven forth to roam where they will among the sands—alone and untended; every five or six days they return of their own accord to drink of the briny wells; as before they are milked and driven forth, the milk being stored, fresh or curdled, in skins for the use of the human population, who for months on end taste no water—for man cannot stomach the excessive brine of these wells on which camels seem to prosper—and live on nothing but milk and dates and the products of the chase. With spear or matchlock—even modern rifles are beginning to be known among the Murra—the tireless hunters go forth for days with nothing but a skin of milk to sustain them or perhaps mounted on a milch camel after their desert game—hares and oryx and occasional birds. Of ostriches, which I imagine to exist in the Biyadh tract, Jabir had nothing to tell me, but the oryx—*Wudhaihi* as they call it—swarms in the Empty Quarter and provides as good sport as meat. Unlike the gazelle it is reputed to depend on its eyes alone for warning of the approach of an enemy, and thus may be approached by a skilled hunter with comparative ease, but its shyness of strange things knows no bounds and a glimpse of man—nay more—the very sight of human tracks in the sand is enough to send it speeding over the waste to a more than safe distance from all possible harm; and when wounded it is an animal to be respected, for they tell of careless men being charged and disembowelled by those long sharp horns. When killed they

skin it whole and leave the carcase, lightly salted after removal of the entrails, in the blazing sun to dry and cure; and thus they eat it raw or partially cooked in the ashes of the camp-fire, considering that a diet of raw oryx-meat and camel's milk has a stimulating effect on the sexual organs. The dried flesh is also brought in to the markets of the Hasa, Sulaiyil and the Wadi for sale—as also are the skins and horns—and is much relished when properly cooked, being, though I never tasted it, something like in flavour to the *Jila* or dried venison of gazelles. Hares and birds are usually eaten half cooked in the ashes.

The ways of the Murra are as simple as their diet. *Muslim* standards of faith and conduct, now generally prevalent among them at least so far as formalities are concerned, are of comparatively recent introduction, and Jabir could easily recall the time when prayers were unknown and the marriage ceremony was devoid of any religious element. Priest and witnesses being dispensed with, the prospective bride and bridegroom placed their *Mish'abs* or camel sticks together upright on the ground between them and circumambulated them twice or thrice repeating in unison some such simple formula as "*Malichna*" ("We are married"); thus made man and wife they proceeded without further ceremony to the consummation of the marriage. Female circumcision which is commonly practised by the Dawasir, the Manasir on the Hasa coast, and by most of the 'Uman tribes—Ibn Jilham told me that the practice is almost confined to the nomad elements of these tribes and is a relic of the old pagan days of Arabia—is not known among the Murra, who like the true Najd tribes regard it as disgraceful, and, as far as I could gather—though on this point Jabir was somewhat reticent—male circumcision is an innovation of recent times among them. Personal cleanliness is regarded as a secondary virtue—perhaps necessarily in a country where water is so scarce and the permitted substitute of sand is so plentiful; but the Murra enjoy a great reputation for hospitality, and theft, an art in which the 'Ataiba bear away the palm from all Arab tribes as Nasir ibn Talaq readily admitted, is regarded by them as shameful.

Somewhere in the extensive district of Khiran, which though of sand is intersected by glades as it were—they call them *Kharaïm* [1]—among the dunes and knolls serving as thoroughfares for man and beast, lies a tract called Jafura, a depression, it would seem, largely buried by drift-sand and reputed to be the site of an ancient city, of whose history nothing is known, though it may be conjectured that it flourished in the same period as Wubar, a hundred miles or so farther to the west, and formed part of the kingdom of 'Ad ibn Shaddad, whose story I have already related.[2] Of Wubar itself I never could gather any details beyond the traditions attaching to it, probably because it is never visited unless it may be that the Dimnan section of the Murra include it in their range; but Jafura, being the centre of the Murra, who from time to time frequent the Hasa, is better known by hearsay, and many are the strange things they relate of it. From here are said to come the moving stones [3] I have already mentioned in connection with their failure to demonstrate their powers before the assembled guests of 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi; somewhere in the neighbourhood amid the encircling sand is to be found, they say, a life-size statue of a camel in some kind of metal; and the wind blowing over the piled-up sand lays bare from time to time some relic of man's handiwork of past ages, bits of statuary—a severed head or arm or trunk of a stone or marble figure, at which they marvel. But that which they fear most is the *Jinns* or ghosts which frequent the buried town and may be heard of a windy night moaning piteously over the fate that has overtaken the scene of their lives; and I have been assured that any one of weak mind chancing to be near that spot at night would be driven mad with fear. It must indeed be an eerie spot, that dead city of the past far away from human ken, and may be the salty pools about it are all that is left of a great oasis of those times before the sand swept over the face of Southern Arabia. It was always my intention, if ever I should visit the Hasa again, for all these tales I heard after I had left it, to make more particular enquiries about these matters and to endeavour to secure specimens of the relics to be found at Jafura,

[1] Plural of *Kharima*. [2] *Vide* p. 100 *supra*. [3] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 47.

but the opportunity never recurred and I hope some day that another, more fortunate than I, may be able to test the veracity of my informers.

Of the southern fringe of the Rub' al Khali, where it borders on the mountain district of 'Uman on one hand and the Hadhramaut on the other, I could gather but little information except that its tribes are little removed from a wholly barbarous state and more particularly among them the 'Awamir, who are said to wear but the scantiest clothing and to subsist on an exclusive diet of camel's milk and oryx-meat. Of its western extremity however, where the mountain torrents of the Yaman highlands run down into its sand, and the Yam tribes radiating from their centre in the Najran district march with the Murra, I was able to gather much information—albeit of a vague and rambling nature—from many persons with whom I came into contact during this excursion and my sojourn at various places along the course of Wadi Dawasir.

The *Wadi*, as I have already noted, strikes the fringe of the Empty Quarter at a distance of about fifty miles south-east of Sulaiyil. At a similar distance, according to report, south-west of the same place, the southward continuation of the Tuwaiq uplands buries itself in the drifted sand in a tract known as Al Mundafan—the burial-place—half-way between which and the Dawasir channel the barrier is cleft in twain by a watercourse, similar to the *Wadi* and known as Al Fau—a watercourse which, descending from the western mountains, flows thence eastward to a sandy grave. Farther west lie the mountain ranges of Yaman, whose eastern slopes, dotted with prosperous oases in their rugged valleys, merge insensibly into the engulfing sand, while the valleys of Tathlith, Bisha, and Ranya farther north course down through the Asir highlands to form Wadi Dawasir by their confluence on the plain. Such is the bare skeleton of the tract, whose details remain to be filled in. For the most part it has never been visited by a European —Najran alone having been seen and described by Joseph Halevy in 1870—and our knowledge of it rests on information collected at second hand by inquisitive travellers in various parts of Arabia.

So far as I could ascertain the oases, which dot the Ranya valley, are inhabited mainly by Subai' settlers with a sprinkling of Qahtan and Dawasir, while the valleys of Tathlith and Bisha and the mountains behind them are almost exclusively populated by Qahtan, a tribe whose highland section appears to have enjoyed almost complete independence under a vague and nominal Turkish suzerainty exercised from Ibha, and has of recent years exhibited a marked tendency to throw in its lot with Ibn Sa'ud, under whose jurisdiction is the nomadic section living in the deserts of Najd from the confines of their mountain homeland to Riyadh itself, and even farther east. Certain it is that, while I was in Arabia, a certain amount of correspondence passed between the *Amir* of the Qahtan and Ibn Sa'ud in connection with a proposal originated by the former for an extension of *Wahhabi* influence westward into the mountains; the *Amir* was incidentally in receipt of a salary from the Turks at the same time.

The Ranya settlements may be reached in five or six days' easy marching from the Wadi oasis, whence the track leads up Wadi Dawasir past a hillock called Hulaiya and across the sand strip to Raiyaniyya, which is reached on the second evening. Another day across a plain much intersected by offshoots of the three great *Wadis* brings one to the hill of Bajir, whence one follows the Ranya channel past a group of wells known as Raghwa to Rija the first settlement, a few *Qasrs* and cornfields, of Wadi Ranya. Thence at short intervals one passes Suq al Maraghin, a small hamlet with palms; Shumaisat, a few *Qasrs* amid palms; Al Dhurm, hamlet and palms; and arrives at Al Amla, the last and most important settlement of the oasis—a townlet of about 2000 inhabitants. Following the Ranya up for ten miles beyond this point one may skirt along the edge of some black mountains, possibly the Harra Nawasif, until Wadi Turaba is reached and in its bed the extensive oasis of that name, two days' journey north-west of Al 'Amla and as much south-west of Khurma, which lies in the same channel under a different name—Wadi Subai'. As a matter of fact Sa'd, my informant, was of opinion that Wadi Turaba is a tributary of Wadi Ranya and not con-

tinuous with Wadi Subai', but I have preferred in this matter to follow the information of others whom I consider more trustworthy, and to leave the puzzle at that for some European traveller of the future to solve.

The track to the Bisha oasis runs from the Wadi in a west-south-westerly direction past the hillocks of Mutai'an and Abraq al Majarib and across a hummock-studded plain to the Tathlith channel whose lower reaches it crosses at a point about fifty miles due west of the Wadi. Traversing an undulating stretch of about twenty miles in width, in which lie two groups of wells, Hibaiya and Malah, in *Sha'ib*-bottoms three miles apart, the road reaches the base of Waqar al Hamar, a lofty range apparently forming the divide between the Tathlith and Bisha valleys, and ascends it by a pass. Beyond lies an open undulating sandy tract with several *Sha'ibs* rising to the ridge of Rak, near whose summit water is available in a group of fifteen water-holes. Another strip of bare sandy plain leads to a well-marked depression, which the road follows down to its confluence with Wadi Bisha itself, just short of which stands a prominent crag known as Khushaim al Dhib. In the *Wadi* at this point is an extensive coppice of *Halfa* and *Tarfa* bushes with a plantation of palms beyond it marking apparently the point at which it debouches from the mountains into a tract of foothills, through which it descends at a sufficiently easy gradient to admit of extensive cultivation in its bed. The road now follows the channel downstream past the various settlements which constitute the Bisha oasis—Raushan, a village with palms; and Naji' of the same character with a large fort called Qasr Bani Thaur close beyond; and Junaina, the chief of the settlements. Beyond this the valley traverses a plain, in which it spreads out in a number of branches connecting it with the Ranya on one hand and the Tathlith on the other, to Bajir and Raiyaniyya, whence Sa'd, who visited these settlements by the route above described, returned home down Wadi Dawasir, having spent about sixteen days in a round tour which might with greater expedition have been accomplished in ten.

He had also visited the Tathlith oasis steering a south-westerly course from the Wadi past the ridge of Baraïm

al Bidh and striking the Tathlith channel at the Raiyan wells after a march of fifty-five miles. The Kaif group of wells, a few miles upstream, took him past—but without visiting—the villages and palm-groves of Jash and Qinna lying to the right of the main channel in tributary *Sha'ibs* to the wells of Affaza, a short day's journey beyond which lies the large village of Hamdha with 1500 inhabitants. A similar day's journey upstream brought him to 'Amq, the premier settlement of the group, in a large basin dotted with *Qasrs* and palm-groves—the source, as he said, of the Tathlith, though I imagine it rather to be the point of its debouchment from the mountains and the *nexus* of the 300 torrents, which, he assured me, mingle their waters at this place. Behind the mountains to westward and high up on the Asir plateau lies the flourishing market-town of Khamis Mushait,[1] too high for the cultivation of dates.

Southward of Tathlith the mountains send forth valleys at frequent intervals—Hasan named no less than seventeen to me between it and the great Jauf valley in which are the remains of the famous dam of Marib and the nucleus of the Hadhramaut valleys—eastward over the plain towards the Empty Quarter. Some of these doubtless combine to form the Fau channel which strikes through the Tuwaiq barrier, but the majority of them are of no practical importance, and only two merit a special mention. These are the twin valleys of Habauna and Najran, rich fertile valleys flowing with milk and honey, and "famous as the last refuge of Christianity in Arabia"—perhaps no less remarkable as the farthermost outpost of the Jews who still sojourn in the peninsula. The two depressions, separated by a low plateau or ridge, run side by side eastward into the sands whereafter they cease to be;[2] in both are flourishing oases

[1] There is a track from this town to the Wadi by way of Jash, the intermediate stages being Taribi (1½ days) and Subaikha (1 day) from it, and the same distance from Jash.

[2] The Habauna has been thought to be a tributary of Wadi Dawasir, but this is certainly not the case. Wadi Najran has been reported as flowing into a *Wadi* called Aftana or Aftan, and so into the sands, but all the enquiries I made failed to elicit any information except that Wadi Najran flows on *ila an tindafin fi 'l raml* (until it is buried in the sand). I suggest that the name Aftana may have been derived from some such remark not properly heard.

of great extent with many hamlets and villages of semi-nomadic tribesfolk, and through them flow brooks of running water, almost, if not quite, perennial. These are settlements of which under the name of Al Najran the poor citizens of Wadi Dawasir speak with bated breath, and their own denizens with pardonable pride, as a centre of civilisation and prosperity, though, when all is said and done, they are probably no more than flourishing oasis-groups of limited capacity, supporting a population, whose major portion still roams the deserts with its cattle and still preys on the highways upon the peaceful traffic of mankind.

Najran looms large in the commercial scheme of Arabia as a desert port, towards which the overland argosies of Southern Najd direct their course to load cargoes of Yaman coffee-berries—rich wares to barter for bales of Indian cloth and other necessaries at the inland market towns. Here meet many roads from Jauf southwards and Sa'da in the mountains, from the Hadhramaut whither they go in ten days of south-easterly march and from Sulaiyil and the Wadi, each six days' journey north and north-west respectively—perhaps 120 to 150 miles. From Sulaiyil the road strikes across the eastern slope of Tuwaiq, in a dip of which is a single well called Hassi just short of the broad valley of Fau, in which also water may be found at times in the flood season in the depression of Al Jilat. Thereafter the uplands dwindle down into a sandy waste, whose outlying ridge the road skirts finding water in solitary wells in the *Shai'bs* of Hima and Wuraik, a day's march short of Habauna. It is a dreary march, and the long stretch between Hassi and Hima is a sore trial to the heavily laden coffee-caravans in the dry season; it is, moreover, infested with brigands, whom it is nobody's business to keep in check, as also is the road from the Wadi, which is better supplied with water. This track strikes the wells of 'Uwaifara, a dozen or so in a shallow depression, on the second day out, those of Wajid a day later, a single draw-well in the Qiri valley, which comes down from the highlands, on the fourth day, and runs in to Habauna across the waterless eastward-trending valleys of Najd and Hima—both of these from the mountains of the west.

What the total population of the Najran-Habauna

tract may be it would be difficult to say. Certain it is that, settled and nomad, it greatly exceeds that of the whole Dawasir valley, and its outstanding element is the tribal confederation known as Ahl Yam, the surviving branch in its place of origin of a family that has given many tribes to Najd. Excluding these sections, which, now grown to tribal proportions, claim a common descent with the Yam from an ancestor apparently known to tradition as Wu'ail, the tribe seems to be divided into three main groups—Al Sulaiman, Al Fatima, and Al Madhkar—and these into the sections, whose separate existence is recognised to-day. Whether the tribal sections maintain their separate identity in the settled area, as do the Dawasir divisions, or have undergone the process of fusion, which is so noticeable in the settlements of Central Najd, or whether the settlements acknowledge the authority of any single ruler or of an organised diet I could not discover, though from conversations with Sum'an, Hasan and others, and their remarks on the diversity of religious beliefs prevalent among them I carried away the impression that the villages of Najran faithfully reflect the divisions and even the animosities certainly prevalent in the various nomad groups dependent on them, and that the nearest approach to organisation is the instinct of self-preservation, which rallies them in face of a common foe and becomes dormant as soon as the danger is overpast; at other times they fight and bicker among themselves as Arabs are wont to do.

So far as any one section may be said to be in a dominant position among its fellows, pride of place should perhaps be accorded to the Mahshil, whose paramount chief, Muhammad ibn Sajwa, named after his mother in accordance with a practice common in the south, appears to enjoy a high reputation as a leader of men. But the most notorious sections of the confederation are the Rizq and Sulum, incorrigible brigands, the curse of the southern highways, and the terror of the *Wadi*. A common creed, so strong an instrument in Najd for the maintenance of law and order, is replaced in Najran by a wide diversity of religious doctrine and practice, which greatly assists the centrifugal tendencies of its tribal units. In matters of faith each man is apparently

a law unto himself for the various sections seem to be much split up by internal schisms. In such circumstances any attempt to classify the tribal divisions on the basis of creeds must needs be far from correct, as I realised only too well from the widely inconsistent accounts given by my various informants. The outstanding fact seems to be that until recently the Yam tribes were roughly divided into two sects, the *Biyadhiyya* of 'Uman origin and *Rufadha*, a term by which my informants vaguely meant the *Shia'* faction, and the particular branch of it known as the *Isma'ili* sect. This latter roughly includes the whole of the Fatima and Madhkar groups, though among the lawless Rizq and Sulum sections of the latter there are many who are scarcely entitled to be considered *Muslims* at all, and apparently retain some relics of pagan nature-worship, reverencing under the name of Sullah and in addition to the *Muslim* Allah a mountain of their country, to which they make offerings of meat, butter, and other things—leaving them before it to be consumed by the sun. The various sections of the Mahshil are of the *Biyadhiyya* persuasion, a schism having something in common with *Wahhabi* doctrines, which in consequence and by reason of their greater accessibility and modern revival appear to have made considerable headway in the last few years among several sections of the group—certainly the Rashid and Fahhad, whose appearance before the tribunal of Ibn Sa'ud's representative in the Wadi was sufficient confession of their conversion, and possibly others. The spread of such a tendency to the remaining sections can scarcely fail to pave the way for a great southward extension of Ibn Sa'ud's sway—a contingency which will certainly make for greater peace and security in the tumultuous south —and the religious developments of Najran in the near future deserve most careful study by any one who is interested in the future of Arabia. The *Biyadhiyya* sect apparently dispenses altogether with the *Adhan* and congregational prayer, while among the peculiarities related to me of the *Isma'ilis* are the substitution of the words "*Hai 'ala khair al aml*"[1] for the orthodox "*Hai 'ala 'l*

[1] Apparently meaning "Hasten to excellent hope," and not "Hasten to excellent work," the last word being *Aml* not *'Aml*.

salat" of the call to prayer, and the omission of the *Amin* as a congregational response at the end of the first *Sura* of the *Quran*, with which prayers are begun.

Among the galaxy of creeds, which differentiates Najran from the oasis-settlements of Najd and suggests a degree of toleration surprising in such surroundings, room is actually found for a small Jewish colony of four families, the descendants, they say, of immigrants from the large Jewish settlement at San'a. Left to their own religious practices and mode of life without interference of any kind by their *Muslim* neighbours, these children of Israel eke out a lonely existence among their wild fellow-citizens, prospering greatly by their skill as gunsmiths and metal-workers, and by their financial operations, a free and respected community. Their dagger-sheaths and other ornamental work in gold and silver enjoy a wide reputation among the Arabs.

Such is Najran; of Jauf, the centre of the old Sabaean civilisation, and the famous dam of Marib, whose collapse in days of yore spread ruin over the flourishing settlements of Arabia Felix, I heard nothing but vague rumours as of a far-off land.

CHAPTER XI

THE PLATEAU BARRIER OF TUWAIQ

1. Amid the Tributaries of Wadi Dawasir

We spent the night of June 6 in a charming little bay of the Tuwaiq escarpment at the point where the Kumaih torrent-bed issues abruptly from its gaunt flank amid a litter of tumbled boulders. The sombre cliff towered above us to a height of 500 feet or more in a sheer precipice of ruddy sandstone topped by a thin layer of yellowish limestone and aproned about its base with a glacis of fallen rubble—the accumulation of long ages of nature's work. Here and there a well-grown acacia and patches of succulent *Markh* clothed the nakedness of the scene, and coarse grasses struggled to prolong the memory of a passing flood.

Ibrahim and his fellows had been anxious to return by the beaten track which we had followed to the Wadi, but I had insisted vehemently on a different route, and with a bad grace they had yielded the point by way of consoling me for the yet fresh outrage they had inflicted on me by the dismissal of Jabir. So long as the route was not the one by which we had come, I cared not whether it skirted the western fringe of the Tuwaiq barrier or struck over the uplands of its broad back, and it was the latter alternative which was adopted as being less barren and monotonous than the other, and withal more bountifully endowed with water. It was thus that for the next eighteen days we toiled laboriously along the summit of the plateau until we came again to Riyadh, and throughout the march I was able by enquiry and observation to link up the ravines and watercourses, which score its rolling uplands, with the main drainages

I had crossed on our outward march, and at rare intervals to obtain glimpses of the mountainous country to the westward, which I had traversed on my journey to the Red Sea in the previous December.

The ascent from the western plain to the summit of the plateau by way of the steep and narrow defile of Sha'ib Kumaih was a laborious business, the negotiation of which involved a great strain on the laden camels and a slow rate of progress. A hundred yards or so in width at its mouth, the passage, down which the torrent pours when in flood at a sharp gradient, narrows rapidly between sheer walls of rock, and the track follows the torrent-bed itself except in two places where a precarious stairway has been cut out over great falls of rock, from which the flood-waters descend n the rainy season in cascades forty or fifty feet in height.

At the foot of one of these falls we found two pools of flood-water nestling among great boulders and halted a while to water the camels and fill our skins, rejoicing, after many days' experience of the brackish well-water of the Wadi, to taste once more the cool sweet water of the floods, muddy but refreshing. The sandy bed of the torrent was full of water to be had for scratching it up, and it was of this that we drew for our own purposes while the camels slaked their thirst at the standing pools. And while we halted for this purpose I noticed that the smooth flat surface of a great slab of rock about ten feet square by the side of one of the pools was scored with curious devices of a primitive character —doubtless nothing more than the handiwork of some idle Arab in recent times and as such devoid of meaning or significance, but curious none the less in a country where inscriptions of any kind are rare indeed and, where they occur, are generally easy of identification as *Wasms* or tribal property-marks. In this case, however, my companions seemed at a loss for any such explanation of the marks, some typical specimens of which I copied.

Our farther progress was now barred by the precipice of the waterfall, which we had to circumvent by a perilously narrow path running along a ledge carved out of the wall on the left-hand side of the gorge and blocked at frequent intervals by fallen boulders. I preferred to climb to the

top of the rise on my own feet and sat down to watch the rest of the caravan follow suit. Clumsy as he looks the camel is not altogether without agility, and I marvelled to watch the heavily loaded baggage animals toil slowly but surely up that precarious path. The proceedings were marred only by a single accident, which occurred when, half-a-dozen animals having shown the way, the next in the line suddenly declined to move any farther and completely blocked the path to those behind. This necessitated a certain amount of amateur road-making, which took the form of rolling great boulders off the path into the torrent-bed below, and resulted in a very slight improvement of the road. The obstructive camel was then induced to make another effort, but had gone but a few steps when he came to grief again and collapsed heavily on the rocky floor—an accident which did not prevent his being unceremoniously urged to complete the ascent, though it afterwards transpired that it had caused an internal injury serious enough to place him *hors de combat*, and incidentally to provide us with an unexpected, but none the less welcome addition to our larder, for whose replenishment with meat we should otherwise have had to depend on chance meetings with shepherds in the inhospitable uplands through which our course lay.

Above this obstacle the bed of the *Sha'ib* was of solid rock worn smooth by the passage of torrents and dotted here and there with *Samar* bushes and coarse grasses, its width being about fifty yards between tumbled masses of rock, behind which the walls of the gorge rose precipitously some 200 or 300 feet above our heads.

The second precipice at the head of this section of the gorge was negotiated without difficulty and led us by a zigzag path on to a higher level, some 300 feet above our camp of the previous night according to my aneroid, where the gorge developed into a bare valley some 200 yards across between hill-sides less steep than the cliffs behind us and perhaps not more than 100 feet in height. At the top of this valley a low ridge forms the divide between the Kumaih *Sha'ib* and that of Kumah, a somewhat larger ravine trending southward through the confused maze of knolls and ridges which constitute the Tuwaiq immediately north of

Wadi Dawasir or the Afja section of it, of which the Kumah is a tributary.

At this point came the most precarious portion of the ascent, a narrow track following the weathered summit of a long wedge-like ridge which divides the two ravines. An alternative path up the side of this ridge was first tried, but abandoned when it was discovered that a considerable part of it had been completely washed away by a recent flood. The track we followed was but little better, consisting as it did of a fairway not more than ten feet in width with steep slopes on either side and blocked in one place by an immense boulder, which left a path not more than two feet broad on either side. With the exercise of much caution and patience the clumsy beasts were steered past this obstacle into safety, and in a few moments we reached a cairn set up to mark the summit of the plateau, perhaps 2500 feet above sea-level and 500 feet above our last camp.

A wide landscape of desolate rolling downs now burst upon our view; afar off to the west lay the sandy plain across which we had come from the Wadi; the southward horizon was closed in by the bare bluffs of Southern Tuwaiq, with the bold headlands of Bukarat and Khashm Haqban echeloned towards the south-west; the palms of Sulaiyil appeared in the hollow far off to the south-east; while to east and north lay the Tuwaiq plateau furrowed by countless ravines carrying down the drainage of these parts into the channel of Wadi Dawasir. The main artery of these uplands is Sha'ib Maragha whose sources lie some fifty miles north of this point on the ridge, which forms the divide between the Wadi Dawasir and Maqran drainage systems.

Having rested here awhile to recuperate from the exertions of the ascent, we continued our march over the gentle undulations of the plateau past or across a number of petty *Sha'ibs*,[1] which run down into the Kumah, and made a brief halt for breakfast in the greatest of them, Sha'ib Madhhura, from an eminence on whose right bank I looked for the last time on Sulaiyil.

The plateau now sloped gently upwards as we held on a

[1] Named Sumair, Umm al Tul, Wa'ra, Ithiba, Shuqaib and others.

northerly course towards a low cross-ridge called Khutaiyim Khanuqa, and my companions hailed with joy the reappearance of the scrubby *Arfaj*, a plant which is said to occur only north of the *Wadi*. The sun blazed fiercely down on the parched surface of the wilderness, which shone again with the light reflected from myriads of crystals littering its face far and wide, and in spite of a steady cooling breeze from the north we were glad when it was time to halt for a noon siesta.

We resumed our march in the afternoon down a gentle eastward slope between the Khutaiyim ridge and a lesser rise beyond it, which formed as it were a shute terminating abruptly in a sharp fall into the deep rocky cleft of Sha'ib Sudaira, where we halted for the night by the pools of Khanuqa. The sides of the cleft at its head were about forty feet in height, and its bed of great rock-slabs worn smooth by the action of water was about thirty yards across and profusely covered with vegetation of almost tropical luxuriance and of a strange aspect, the most notable of its plants being the *Shafallah* with its curious pendent fruit resembling that of the egg-plant in shape, though of a reddish colour when ripe, and containing a profusion of black seeds embedded in a whitish pulp, which are edible and have a hot mustard-like taste which is not unpleasant. Among other bushes I noticed the *Wahat* with its claw-like thorns for the first time since I had left Riyadh for the south.

The Khanuqa pools are three in number scattered over a length of about a mile from the head of the *Sha'ib*, which runs eastward for some distance and then turns south to join the Majma', the cliffs in its lower portions rising to greater heights than those at its head. The first of the pools, by which we halted for the night, lies in a deep hollow of the rock about twenty yards square near the head of the gorge; the second, distinguished by the name of Julaita Ta'amir, is of smaller dimensions and of a less permanent character, being about twenty feet long, ten broad and five deep, and liable to exhaustion in the summer droughts, while that already mentioned and the third, to which only the name of Khanuqa properly belongs, are regarded as permanent features in the scene, the latter

particularly being of considerable depth and reputed inexhaustible, its form being that of an isosceles triangle with its apex upstream and its two long sides bounded by walls of rock rising to a height of five feet above the level of the water, while its base is a sandy stretch level with the bed of the *Sha'ib* and shelving gently down to the water's edge; the length of this pool is about thirty feet, and its width along the base line about fifteen.

The scenery of this little ravine with its rank vegetation in a setting of bare rock and its pools with dragon-flies flitting about the vegetation on their banks had a charm all of its own, and I shall always remember it, when other scenes fade from my memory, as one of the few things of real beauty which I met with during my wanderings in Arabia. The greater is my regret that my stock of films was exhausted, and that I had no means of preserving for the benefit of others the impressions which are still fresh in my own mind.

On my return to our camp from an excursion downstream to the lowest of these pools I found my companions on the best of terms with themselves and all the world. The camel which had fallen by the way had been pronounced in my absence unfit to live, and this verdict, prompted I could not help suspecting by other than purely veterinary considerations, was promptly followed by action. The great gullet of the murmuring beast had been slit from shoulder to shoulder in the name of the Merciful, and I found willing hands busily at work on the lifeless carcase hard by a pool of blood which stained the rock. Great preparations were going forward for our dinner, while Ibrahim and a few others were seated round the fire enjoying an appetiser in the form of great fids of the liver half roasted on the cinders and liberally covered with salt. I joined the circle and tasted a morsel of the delicacy, which nearly made me sick—so coarse it was and raw withal,—but the others evidently thought it a great treat, and every man had his share. The meat of the animal properly cooked and served with rice was certainly a great improvement on a meatless dinner, but camel flesh has, in my opinion, little to commend it except the absence of other food.

It is coarse, tough and stringy, with a slightly unpleasant flavour, though the particular animal in question on this occasion was good of its kind, being a *Ruba'*, that is to say, in its fifth year. "To-night," said Ibn Jilham, "we are fortunate indeed in enjoying the three great blessings of nomad life: *Aman*, or security, for here there is no danger of brigands; *Ma*, the water of the pools, and *Na'ma*, the blessing of God in the shape of an unexpected and bountiful supply of meat." That supply lasted us for several days while we journeyed over a country where sheep were non-existent, and the gazelles, of which we had seen one pair as we approached these pools, too elusive.

The normal age of a camel is reckoned to be something between fifteen and twenty-five years, the span of a generation, the period, as the Arab counts, between the marriage of two generations of the same family—a camel, which comes in its youth to a man as his bride's dowry, being expected to be yet "under him" on the occasion of his son's marriage. Thirty years is reckoned the extreme limit of old age for these beasts, whose females may produce ten or twelve calves in a lifetime.

From this point to the northern limit of what we may regard as the Wadi Dawasir catchment area the uplands of Tuwaiq fall longitudinally into two distinct tracts of widely different character, the western portion comprising the gently undulating surface of a desolate plateau sloping easily down from the rim of the western escarpment eastward and worn into shallow folds by the flow of the drainage, while the eastern section is a maze of abrupt ridges and deep ravines connected with the central gorge of Sha'ib Maragha, which runs through it from north to south until it issues from the upland tract into the Sulaiyil valley under the name of Majma'. The transition from the one section to the other is very abrupt, and our track lay along the dividing line between the two passing close by the heads of the various ravines which carry off the drainage of the plateau into the main channel.

Rising from the bed of Sha'ib Sudaira on to the level of the plateau we soon dropped into the broad ravine of Umm Husaiya, a tributary of the Sudaira with water-pools,

according to report, at its junction therewith. Beyond it we passed through several grassy coombs covered with a profusion of acacia-bushes of the *Wahat* and *Kidad* species, the latter a gum-bearing bush. In the next ravine, Sha'ib Tharar, so called from a bush not unlike the *Sidr* though reputed to be found only in the south, which is found here in profusion together with acacias and many grasses, we halted for breakfast. This *Sha'ib*, which runs down into the Maragha and is one of its more important tributaries, is about seventy yards wide with fairly steep, weathered cliffs on either side, and a bottom of rock-slabs alternating with patches of fine sand.

Passing afterwards by a low precipice, which forms the head of Sha'ib Umm al Hamam, we reached the head of the fine gorge of Sha'ib Nir, where, in the bay formed by a semicircular precipice some forty feet in height, and partly overhung by a shelf of rock, lay a great pool known as Umm al Hisha, though the dwarf palms from which it derived this name are no longer in evidence. This pool is about thirty yards square and said to be of great depth, the walls of the precipice descending sheer to the water's edge on three sides, while on the fourth, the downstream side, the bed of the channel is covered with a rich carpet of rank grasses and sedge.

Other tributaries [1] of the Nir lay to the side of our path beyond this point, but we did not strike water again until we reached the Hifna ravine, another direct tributary of the Maragha and about eighty yards wide. It is formed by the junction of several drainage troughs of the plateau, and is closed in by steep cliffs hollowed out in many places so deeply that overhanging ledges of rock serve as caves, affording shelter from the sun and rain to the shepherds who frequent this locality to water their flocks. In its gravel bed and rocky hollows we found a number of shallow pools of beautifully clear water, and enjoyed a siesta in the shade of the caves during the hot hours of the afternoon. Among the evidences of the generations of shepherd folk who had made a similar use of the same spot before us I noticed a rough oven of three slabs propped up against

[1] *E.g.* Umm Hiyaisha and Abu Numais.

the rock wall—such an oven is known as *Mahnidha*—and all about us lay the bones of many a meal consumed by our predecessors, and the dung of sheep and camels which had watered here. This spot is the recognised haunt of the shepherds of the Suwailim (Wudda'in) subsection which resides at Sulaiyil.

Later in the day we resumed our march northwards with the ridge, which forms the right bank of the Maragha channel, gradually converging on our course from the right; but before we reached our evening camp a second ridge interposed between it and us. This was the Khataīm Qurun, not so much a distinct ridge as a line of low table-topped hummocks, behind which the Qurun *Sha'ib* runs down into the Maragha. It was by one of these hummocks that we pitched our camp for the night and from its summit before nightfall I had a good view of the surrounding country—the desolate plateau on one side and the maze of ravines on the other.

Next day we hugged the edge of the Qurun hillocks as we descended to the head of the *Sha'ib* itself, a broad, grassy depression about 400 yards wide with gently sloping banks on either side. Clumps of *Samar*, *Sidr* and *Markh* dot the channel, whose bed like all the watercourses of this area is formed of rock slabs and patches of sand. Farther downstream, and within the fringe of hills which concealed its lower course from our view, there are said to be two wells with water at a depth of four fathoms. Beyond this ravine we followed the course of a shallow tributary sloping down to it from the north, the Dahlat al Baqar, in whose grassy bed we came across some gazelles and several coveys of partridges,[1] called *Hajla* or *Daraj* by the Arabs. The head of this channel lies on a low cross-ridge, which marks the boundary between the drainage, which finds its way southward into Wadi Dawasir, and that which runs eventually into the Maqran depression. From one of the many hillocks by its side I obtained a view of the country, but the view was ever the same—an endless plateau and an endless maze of hills on this side and on that.

[1] *Vide* p. 283, note 1, *infra*.

2. The Sources of the Maqran

Up to this point our course had lain over the summit of the plateau itself following the outer or western edge of a hilly tract, whose ravines converged on the Maragha *Sha'ib*, the main feeder of the middle reaches of Wadi Ḍawasir. Henceforth the general trend of the drainage was not southward, but eastward into the Maqran depression, whose great ponds and farther course through the Biyadh desert I have already described in connection with our passage across it on our southward journey. As I have already indicated, the drainage of the section of the Tuwaiq uplands, on which we now entered, debouches into the valley along the twin channels of Dhaba'iyya and Shutba, and it was amid the upper reaches of these two watercourses that we now marched, leaving the comparatively level surface of the plateau away to the left, and following the courses of their deeply scored gorges into the heart of the hilly tract, where reigned around us the silence of the grave broken only by the echoes of our own voices.

The head of the Dhaba'iyya channel lies in an extensive bushy coomb lying a mile or two on the left flank of our march on the face of the plateau, whose surface was gently depressed on all sides towards it and was folded into low ridges such as that of Saifarain, a continuation of the watershed over which we now passed. This depression of Maqua, as it is called, collects the drainage of the surrounding country from a number of petty runnels, some of which like Umm al Sulaim and Abul 'Ashush are important enough to have names while others are nameless, and sends it forth from an opening in its eastern side along a sandy torrent-bed about twenty yards broad, in which we may recognise the head of the Dhaba'iyya *Sha'ib*. We followed its winding course through charming woodland scenery for a mile or so to the head of a rocky gorge of moderate depth, into which the floods in their season pour down by a dozen crevices, in one of which we found a pool of water[1] about ten yards wide embayed in a sandy bottom at the foot of a low precipice.

[1] Called Taiyibat Ism.

The going now was very rough but otherwise presented no difficulty as we descended over the tumbled rocks into a typical specimen of the Tuwaiq ravines—a torrent-bed of rock and sand about fifty yards across between rough walls of limestone rock weathered into terraces rising to a height of about forty feet on either side of the channel and to a greater elevation farther back. A luxuriant carpet of coarse grasses covered the whole bed of the channel concealing a series of rocky hollows, in which still lay the remnants of the last floods, little pools of the clearest water of varying depth, some but a few inches and covered with a light scum of green vegetable matter, which clung tenaciously to the smooth slabs of rock where the moisture was evaporating. In the midst of this peaceful scene rose a great clump of palms heavily laden with clusters of dates, yet hard and green, but auguring a small harvest in a month's time, and evidence of man's presence in the past. Here in the grateful shade we decided to halt for our noontide siesta, and so pleasant was the spot that the siesta developed into a halt for the night. Close by the palm-clump we found a deep well-spring, which had been partly covered over by the *débris* of the last flood; our guides had known of its existence under the name of Thuqaib, but we only discovered it by accident after having decided to halt by the other temporary pools,[1] which were enough for our purposes.

The spring is a recognised summer watering of the Hanish and Suwailim shepherds of Sulaiyil, whose *Wasms* we found engraved on the face of the cliff lower down in token of their intention to encamp at this spot during the month of *Ramdhan*, now rapidly approaching, and during the ensuing *Mausim* or date season. At first sight it seemed a strange spot for a prolonged tribal sojourn, but the reason for its selection became apparent next day when we descended the ravine, from the next bend of which downward for about two miles extended a thin and somewhat intermittent strip of palms along the borders of long narrow pools, which must not long before have formed a continuous stream. The palms, which depend on nature for fertilisation, may have numbered some 500 stems in all, for the most part of stunted

[1] Such pools are known as *Thaqb* (pl. *Thaqban*).

growth and decadent appearance, but not unfruitful, though the dates of self-fertilised groves are never as large or luscious as those which have been tended by the hand of man. Such as they are, they constitute a welcome addition to the food-stocks of the *Badawin*, who have established a prescriptive right to the produce of this valley, and one can only wonder that the tribesmen have not long since converted this spot into a great and flourishing oasis, for it was out of just such beginnings as these, according to Ibn Jilham, than whom none better knows this country of the south, that the flourishing settlement of Hauta [1] came into being.

The gorge was here narrower and flanked by higher and steeper cliffs than farther up, but immediately below the last palm-clump, whose charred stems bore witness to a local conflagration, it splayed out again to a width of some 150 yards, and the cliffs on either side decreased in height until we came to a wide opening at the confluence of Sha'ib Siri with the main valley. We now left the latter to run down through the tumbled maze of hillocks beyond, in which it is joined by another tributary—Sha'ib Khurum—running down to it behind a transverse ridge of the same name, and climbed up the rising ground on the left bank along the edge of the Siri channel with the Khurum ridge parallel to us at a distance of about two miles on the right.

About a quarter-mile up the Siri ravine under a steep cliff lay a pool of water in the neighbourhood of which we found a number of camels grazing. Their body-marks betokened them as belonging to a section of the Qahtan, whose *Wasms* had also been noted on the cliffs by the Thuqaib spring in company with those of the Dawasir, but we saw no signs about us of the human companions of the animals. It should be remarked that the intrusion of a foreign tribe within the recognised sphere of another is only permitted by the *Badawin* code on the condition that the intruders are introduced by a *Rafiq*, who for the time being acts as host on behalf of his fellow-tribesmen towards his friends temporarily sojourning in their midst.

We halted in this neighbourhood for breakfast, our meal consisting of the last remnants of the camel which had ended

[1] *Vide* p. 288 *infra*.

his days by the Khanuqa pools, and had thus provided us with meat for three whole days. While we were here encamped I made a short excursion to the summit of one of the points of the Khurum ridge, about 3000 feet above sea-level, to survey the country, but, wide as was our view, it comprised a dreary scene of lumpy uplands with no feature to relieve its monotony.

Soon after we had resumed our march Tami alarmed us by announcing that he had espied a party of about fifteen *Dhalul*-riders striking through the rough country in our rear towards the spot where we had breakfasted, but the consensus of opinion among those who gathered with anxious faces to deliberate on the matter was that at worst the party comprised the owners of the camels we had seen, and that our own forbidding appearance had caused them to lie low among the ravines until we were gone. They had now probably gone to our camping-place to examine our tracks and would probably leave us alone, but to make assurance doubly sure we inscribed the *Wasm* of Ibn Sa'ud on the sand and hastened on.

A mile or so farther on we entered a shallow sandy depression about 200 yards wide and bountifully covered with bushes, Sha'ib Mughara, the head of the second of the great valleys of the Maqran system. Known as Mughara for a few miles from this point, Mahbat in its middle reaches and Shutba in its lower course, the ravine varied in character as we advanced down it. At first the sand gave way little by little to a rocky bed with gently shelving banks of well-worn limestone, which continued until we came to a sharp fall of some fifteen feet down a precipice of limestone slabs worn smooth by the passage of flood waters. The bed now became very rough and broken with great boulders tossed about it in confusion, while the cliffs on either side rose precipitously to a height of forty feet. The whole ravine was now profusely covered with luxuriant grasses and many well-grown trees of a species called *Ban*[1]—a species which I had never seen before, and which, according to my companions, is only to be found in a few *Sha'ibs* in this particular neighbourhood; in form and foliage it greatly resembles the

[1] *Moringa peregrina Fiori* (Moringan).

ordinary tamarisk or *Ithil*, from which, however, it differs in its remarkable fruit, a pod of great dimensions containing beans of corresponding size and characteristically named by the Arabs *Zubb al Ban* or the *Penis of the Ban*; the average length of these beans appeared to be about twelve to eighteen inches, but my companions, tickled by my interest in the matter, sought out and brought to me in triumph one specimen exceeding two feet in length.

We halted for a few hours during the heat of the day in a wide bulge of the valley in the neighbourhood of some pools of clear and excellent water bordered with lush vegetation, and reflecting the precipitous walls of the overhanging cliffs of the right bank. Unfortunately the cliffs were on the wrong side so far as we were concerned, and I soon sought the shelter of my tent from the rays of the sun blazing down mercilessly into the airless valley. Subject to the occurrence of the seasonal floods these pools are perennial, but even in years of flood-failure water may always be had in this spot for the trouble of scratching up the sand of the ravine-bed to a depth of a few inches.

Similar pools dotted the ravine at intervals along its farther course, and notably at the confluence with it of the steep-sided gully of Kilawa, immediately beyond which the Mughara runs into the Mahbat, a deep broad gorge with cliffs at least a hundred feet high, which comes down through the plateau from a north-westerly source. At this point we came to, and crossed, a wide grassy glade in the midst of rock-scenery of great splendour. In the middle of the scene lay an extensive patch of palms, somewhat ragged in appearance though more solid than the Thuqaib plantation, while here and there about it lay the ruins of a few stone huts, the relics of a former settlement called Dilham, which with the similar settlement of Shutba some fifteen or twenty miles lower down the gorge belongs to the Khadhran subsection of the Dawasir, but like others of such settlements is left by its *Badawin* to the tender mercies of nature, and is only visited during the *Mausim* for the harvest gathering. Reeds, acacias, *Tarfa* and bushes of other descriptions bear witness by their great profusion to the abundance of water, of which I found more certain indications in the bottom of

an abandoned masonry well sunk to a depth of about two fathoms and in a number of shallow pools.

The right bank of the ravine descends precipitously to its bed in this section, which has a width of about 300 yards, but its left bank up which we now wended our way by an easy zigzag path is gently inclined. The summit reached, we followed along the top of the precipice forming the left bank of the Mahbät in its upper reaches, in whose bed far below we noticed many pools of water. All around us in the rear lay a splendid view of tumbled uplands scored deep by its ravines, while before us lay a more monotonous plateau ascending by an easy gradient and bordered at a short distance on our right by a miniature sierra of ragged brown ridges.

Gradually diverging from the course of the Mahbat beyond which to the westward extended the broad plain of the main plateau we toiled on across a shallow tributary of the Shutba named Sha'ib Surman and crossed the divide between it and Sha'ib Rahaba, the southern fringe of the Aflaj uplands. This ridge forms the water-parting between the Maqran system and the watercourses which traverse the great plain of the Aflaj to lose themselves in the desert spaces of the Biyadh.

We had now had enough of marching for the day, and decided to halt in the shallow depression of the Rahaba, a dry parched tract which spoke of a failure of the seasonal rains in this area as eloquently as the Dhaba'iyya and Shutba gorges had done of their excellence. Three gazelles of a whitish colouring, not, however, considered to be the *Rim* of the sand deserts by our experts, vacated this tract before our advance to be chased in vain by Mubarak, and we welcomed the young crescent of the *Ramdhan* moon with a meatless dinner, which our cooks set to to get ready, while with a few companions I repaired to a neighbouring eminence to search out the western sky for the first appearance of the annual symbol of God's love for mankind. As the sun sank to his setting and vanished from our view, the thin pale crescent emerged from a greenish haze and the fast of *Ramdhan* had begun. "*La ilaha ill' allah,*" was the pious greeting of my companions to the new-born moon,

and many there were doubtless among them who rejoiced that the month of fasting found them on their travels.

3. The Aflaj Uplands

The climatic conditions obtaining on the Tuwaiq plateau during the four days which had elapsed since we ascended to it from the western plain, and during the week which we were now to spend in that section of the Aflaj province to which I have before[1] referred as lying wholly within the folds of the plateau barrier, deserve a few words of mention. This upland tract, lying as it does between the 21st and 23rd parallels of latitude in the midst of a desert country, might well be expected to be uncomfortably hot at any rate in the month of June when the sun at midday was vertically above our heads, but the discomforts of the season, to which I had resigned myself in advance, made themselves conspicuous by their absence, and I look back to the period I spent in these regions as climatically among the most pleasant I have spent anywhere in the East during the summer months. The prevailing wind, which blew daily with extraordinary regularity over the back of the plateau, was from the north; its greatest strength seemed ever to coincide with the hours during which the sun's rays were at their fiercest; and it is doubtless largely due to these circumstances as also no doubt to the high elevation of this region and the extreme dryness of the atmosphere, that the temperature always remained within reasonable limits even during the hottest hours of the day, and sank in the small hours preceding dawn to surprising depths. The highest temperature I recorded during this fortnight was 105° Fahr. and the lowest 59°, while the thermometer at 10 P.M. recorded about 75° with great regularity. Another point of interest in these records is that the *minimum* and *maximum* temperatures I have mentioned were both recorded on the same day, and that the phenomenon, of which this fact is a striking demonstration, was not accidental, the rule being that a day which started with a low temperature would work up in the afternoon to a high one, while a stuffy morning meant a day of

[1] *Vide* p. 68 *supra*.

sustained equability of temperature; for instance, just as the highest *maximum* and lowest *minimum* were recorded on the same day, so were the lowest *maximum* (95°) and the highest *minimum* (73°). Needless to say the days on which the variation of temperature was greatest were the most pleasant. The mean *maximum* during this period was 101° and the mean *minimum* 66°. The winds were generally light to moderate with occasional gusts of greater force, but only on one occasion did we experience a *Simum*, the hot dry north wind, which the Arab hails at this season with joy as the force which ripens the date.

The character of the country, through which we passed on the following day, differed in some respects from that which lay behind us. Hitherto the plateau on the west flank of our march had descended easily to the edge of a rough hilly tract, through which its drainage escapes by way of deep gorges towards the plain beyond; but henceforth the slope of the plateau was towards a low secondary escarpment from the top of which extended a flat shelf of some breadth to the fringe of the hilly tract, from which spurs ran out westward across our path at varying intervals. There was, moreover, a marked northerly tilt of the plateau slope, the effect of which was to form a well-marked funnel culminating in the deep gorge of the Hasraj, through which the drainage of the plateau finds a passage to the plain. Thus the Rahaba and a number of similar shallow depressions which we crossed before reaching the Hasraj—to wit Dahla Sudair, Dahlat al Arnab, Turaifa, and others without names—do not carry off any of the drainage of the main plateau, but have their sources at the eastern edge of the secondary shelf, whence they run down between low ridges through the hilly tract to the Hunnu and so into the Biyadh.

For about seven miles we marched on the following morning over a monotonously barren country until we reached the Turaifa ravine, about which the surface of the land became very rough. The ravine itself was sunk some fifteen or twenty feet below the level of the plain between well-worn cliffs, whose ruddy sandstone face was varied here and there by patches of soft white chalk. A ridge beyond it formed the divide between the insignificant drain-

age channels we had crossed during the morning and the Hasraj gorge, towards whose head we now wended our way alongside the tortuous and rocky bed of a *Sha'ib* known as Umm al Diqqa, "the mother of troubles." To the far distance in front of us we now discerned a fine series of steep escarpments, each ending at the edge of the plateau in a bold headland, and the whole constituting a repetition of the echelon arrangement, which is so marked a feature of the main western escarpment of the Tuwaiq barrier. So far as I could judge the rough hilly tract, which had marched with us on our right flank all this time, now came abruptly to an end giving place to a double plateau, one sloping down at an easy gradient from the outer rim of the western cliffs to the foot of the secondary cliff from whose summit again the other sloped down similarly towards the Aflaj plain. The only difference between the two is that the eastern plateau is pierced at intervals by deep ravines collecting the drainage of the other at convenient spots and carrying it down through the secondary barrier.

The lower extremity of the Umm al Diqqa *Sha'ib* is paved with great smooth slabs of limestone leading down to the head of a tremendous precipice, over which the water must fall in the flood season in a magnificent cascade. The height of the fall must be fully 200 feet, and it was not until we had followed along the edge of the gorge for some distance that we found a practicable, though narrow and boulder-strewn, path leading obliquely down the side of the cliff to the bed of the ravine below.

The Hasraj gorge at this point was certainly the finest bit of scenery we had yet beheld, its steep cliffs dominating a narrow valley bottom covered with bushes and studded with pools glittering in the sunlight, and opening out to the northward into the Haddar plain almost surrounded by sheer walls of rock.

Since leaving Raka at the extremity of Wadi Dawasir five days before, we had enjoyed none but our own company, and had seen no signs of humanity except for the fleeting glimpse of a *Badawin* party which had caused us a moment's anxiety the previous day; but now, below us, as we halted an instant to take in the scene and marshal our caravan for

the none-too-easy descent, we saw the black tents and white fleeces of a shepherd encampment, and rejoiced that once again we were within hail of our own kind, a party of the Masrur subsection of the Misa'ara Dawasir, residents of Haddar.

No sooner had we reached the bottom and selected the shady neighbourhood of one of the unoccupied pools for our midday camp than envoys went forth to forgather with the shepherds, and to bring back to those who had stayed behind, not only the news of the day, which amounted to but little, but what was doubly welcome—a supply of fresh *Liban* or sheep's butter-milk and a couple of goats for our dinner.

We were now but five miles distant from Haddar and took matters easily, but resumed our march in the afternoon down the gorge. Pool after pool we passed, each with its small encampment and flock of sheep or goats, until we came to a ruined grange with a well at the confluence of the broad Hamid ravine with the Hasraj gorge, which now splayed out into a wide circular plain, across which we passed to a projecting shoulder of the cliff on our right hand. Before us now at no great distance in a sharp angle formed by the cliffs lay the oasis of Haddar, a lovely splash of green against a ruddy background of encircling cliffs.

Through it runs the storm channel of the *Sha'ib*, a broad band of sand, on whose left bank we camped near one of the four hamlets of the settlement and in the midst of palm-groves. The oasis of Haddar, which extends for about two miles from west to east along an eastward trending reach of the Hasraj channel above the point at which the latter strikes in a narrow gorge through the cliff-barrier, comprises a considerable area of palm-groves and cornfields divided into four distinct sections, each dependent on a separate hamlet. I had an excellent view of the whole settlement from a commanding hillock rising out of the plain about a mile north of our camp, while I also took the opportunity to ride through the oasis to its easterly extremity before we settled down for the night.

Two of the hamlets and the palm-groves belonging to their inhabitants lie along the right bank of the torrent-

bed and the rest of the oasis on the other side. The most westerly settlement comprises about seven somewhat inferior palm-groves and as many scattered *Qasrs*, scarcely worthy of consideration as a hamlet, but known collectively by the name of the tribal unit to which its people belong, the Khulaiyif subsection of the Wudda'in, whose leader is one Faisal ibn Mihtaj. This section of the oasis lies on the right bank of the channel as also does the next in order eastward, the Misarir, comprising a dense and very prosperous block of some fifteen groves with considerable undergrowth of vines and other fruit trees centring on a compact hamlet, which, with a few *Qasrs* scattered about the groves, may contain a population of about 300 souls, whose chief is Mahmal ibn Fuhaid. The population of the Khulaiyif section probably does not exceed 100 souls.

The storm channel, which is about 400 yards wide on the average, forms the boundary between those elements of the oasis population which boast of Dawasir extraction and an extremely interesting 'Anaza element, which occupies the two remaining sections of the settlement and whose survival in this locality takes us back to the long-distant days of the 'Anaza occupation of the Aflaj province, of which I have treated already [1] in connection with the history of Badi'a. The Nutaifat and Fuhail subsections of the Jumaila branch of the 'Anaza have given their respective names to the two hamlets in which they still live, each about 200 strong, in spite of their hostile neighbours, the quarrelsome Dawasir, for until quite recently there had been ceaseless fighting particularly between the Nutaifat and the Misarir, and it is only due to Ibn Sa'ud and the measures he has taken to restrain the turbulence of his subjects that Haddar has known peace for almost a decade. It was near the Nutaifat hamlet that we elected to camp for the night under the protection of its headman Dhafi ibn Nushan, whose authority over the whole 'Anaza population of the oasis is acknowledged by 'Abdulrahman ibn Maïr, the headman of the Fuhail section. The palm-groves of the latter are but four or five in number and of ragged appearance, but there is a great abundance of *Ithil* in its area, while

[1] *Vide* p. 108 *supra*.

the Nutaifat section comprises about as great a cultivated area as the Misarir including two *Qasrs* and palm-groves on the right bank of the channel in close proximity to the domains of the rival community.

Haddar contests with the oasis of Hamar the premier position among the settlements of this upland tract, which is placed for administrative and revenue purposes under the supreme control of the governor of the Aflaj province. Its palm-groves and cultivated area generally belong exclusively to the residents of the settlements, while their *Badawin* counterparts enjoy no proprietary rights therein, though as elsewhere they flock to the oasis during the date harvest and are not allowed to depart empty. The palm-groves, on which is levied a tax of 5 per cent on their gross produce for the benefit of the State treasury, depend partly on irrigation by the seasonal floods, which are deflected from their course by light barriers formed of palm-logs and brushwood into a number of low-banked distributaries, and partly on watering by lift from wells sunk in the gardens to a depth varying between seven and thirteen fathoms according to their position in the valley and the character of the floods, the wells at the upper extremity of the settlement being deeper than those at the lower, while both are subject to fluctuation of as much as two fathoms in their depth to water from season to season.

The *Ramdhan* fast had now begun and the inhabitants of Haddar, having suffered the agony of the first day's cruel privations—for it is during the first few days of self-acclimatisation to the new conditions that the torture is greatest especially in the matter of abstinence from water at such a season as this—had little enough energy to expend in idle curiosity about us. The day's fast is broken or may be broken at the first sound of the call to the sunset prayer, but there are many among the *Wahhabis* who await the last syllable of the *Adhan* before doing so, while others are less punctilious, and many a *Muadhdhin* even has been known to drone out the dreary call coffee-cup in hand. The traveller is altogether exempt from the fast, and the term "traveller" is liberally interpreted as meaning one whose home and family are not in the place where he happens to

be, for it is urged that even the Prophet himself did not observe the fast when he was at Mecca because his home was at Madina. For those returning to their homes on a day of the sacred month, it is laid down that when they arrive within sight thereof they may halt to eat and drink their fill, but that from the moment that they mount again to resume their journey the obligation to fast becomes operative, and remains upon them until they have again lost sight of the locality. And it is not only food and drink that are banned at such a time. but sexual intercourse is forbidden between sunrise and sunset, and the *Muslim* who is addicted to tobacco must put it from him during the same period—this being perhaps the most serious privation though not so to the strict *Wahhabi* or to those who, like him, consider the weed unlawful at all times.

A few remarks may not be out of place at this point on the subject of prayer generally among the people of Wahhabi-land. When journeying they are permitted from motives of convenience to telescope the five appointed times of prayer into three, but not thereby to shorten—though the process is actually known as *Taqsir* or shortening—the prayers themselves. The dawn prayer takes place at the usual hour—that is, when the first light of the real as opposed to the false dawn is seen in the eastern sky—both on a journey and otherwise, but the traveller may unite the midday and afternoon devotions at a time roughly midway between the two, or, if anything, nearer the appointed time for the latter though not later than that, while at sunset he may combine the *'Asha* or evening service with that prescribed for that particular time, namely the *Maghrib*, but the time for this is unalterably fixed at the moment when the sun sinks below the horizon or—as some of the stricter sort insist—when the light definitely attributable to the sun itself is seen no more.

The *Adhan* formula is identical with that commonly used by other branches of the *Sunni* church with the addition at the end of it of the favourite *Wahhabi* phrase "*La ilaha ill' allah.*" The congregation thereupon assembles at its discretion behind a *masjid* or line drawn upon the sand with a central outward bulge representing the *Mihrab* or Mecca-

ward niches of the mosques, in which the *Imam*, generally a person chosen to lead the prayer on account of his age or standing, or of his learning, and almost invariably in the case of our party on this occasion, Ibn Jilham, takes his stand. When two or three persons are gathered together behind him the *Imam* rapidly intones the *Adhan* a second time to give laggers a moment's grace and ends with the twice-repeated formula: "*Qad qamat al salat*" ("The service has begun"). The sunset prayer, which is almost identical with the *'Asha*, is now gone through, and at its conclusion the *Imam*, first turning his head to the right and then to the left, repeats in each direction the formula: "*Salam 'alaikum wa rahmat allah.*" There follows a slight pause and a general clearing of throats before the whole congregation rises from the previous sitting position to its feet to begin the *'Asha* whose details are as follows:

(All standing.) *Imam* says: "*Allahu akbar.*" He then intones the first *Sura* of the *Quran* at the end of which the congregation joins fervently in the chorus of *Amin.*

The congregation remains standing while the *Imam* recites another portion of the *Quran*, at the conclusion of which following his lead all bend slightly forward, while the *Imam* recites: "*Inna 'llah liman hamada*"; whereupon, the congregation having resumed the former erect position, the *Imam*, followed by the congregation, prostrates himself thrice, repeating at each prostration the formula, "*Allahu akbar.*"

A fourth time he repeats the same words and the whole congregation rises to its feet.

The whole performance is now repeated precisely as before from the beginning of the first *Sura* to the fourth *Allahu akbar*, at which the congregation rises from its last prostration to a sitting position, and a few moments of silence ensue, at the end of which the *Imam*, turning as before to right and left, pronounces the benediction as at the close of the *Maghrib* service: *Salam 'alaikum wa rahmat allah.* Thereupon he turns round and faces the congregation, all sitting, and there follows a confused murmur of voices repeating three *formulae* containing recitations of the attributes of God, each thirty-three times, or ninety-nine times in all.

This is in turn followed by much throat-clearing and a period of respectful repose interspersed with ordinary conversation on mundane matters, and, the service being at an end, the congregation disperses at leisure.

I have thought it worth while to record a specimen of prayer among the *Wahhabis* just as I observed it, not because it is materially different from the form of prayer in common use among *Muslims* of the *Sunni* church generally, but for the information of those who may be interested to know whether or not the *Wahhabis* pray as others do. With but slight differences they do, but they differ most from others in the total absence of all empty formality both in their attitudes, which are left to individual predilection, and in the matter of single-hearted concentration on the proceedings, for I have seen them rise suddenly to their feet in the midst of a solemn prostration to chase an unruly camel and return to their prayers for all the world as if no interruption had occurred.

We had now returned as it were to civilisation and had no longer any urgent need of the southerners who had ridden with us thus far partly to direct us in the right way over the trackless waste of the plateau and partly to vouch for us in the event of our falling in with any bands of the tribes to which they belonged. So before mounting on the following day to continue our journey northwards we bade farewell to three of our number probably never to see them more. Tuwairish ibn Qasim, the *Wudda'ani*, had accompanied us from Laila in the capacity of guide, but had soon been relegated to the position of an unwelcome hanger-on. I parted with him without a pang of regret, rejoicing that I should never hear his nasal cockney accents again, or ever again have to depend on him for information regarding the geography of the south country, for many a time, as I had subsequently discovered, he was content to invent names of places and other natural features rather than confess his ignorance, lest by doing so he should forfeit my goodwill and the bounty which went with it. In all matters he had been an ideal second string to Ibrahim, and the pair of them will ever be among the bad memories of my Arabian sojourn. Mubarak, the deer-stalker, was a man of very

different kidney, to whom I bade farewell with lively sorrow, for he had ever been at my side, indefatigable in my service, and always ready to place at my disposal his intimate knowledge of a restricted sphere, whose limits none knew better than himself, and he never transgressed. On him we had counted for the provision of venison by the way, but in this respect he had failed us with an empty bag, for such hunting in the midst of a march is of the hardest, though no fatigue and no distance deterred him from the pursuit, and no failure ruffled the smooth temper or the gentle manner of speech and gesture which a long life in the desert had bred in him. But pleasing as was his personality it was eclipsed by that of the third of the departing trio, Hasan ibn Ghanim, the *Mahshili* of the Yam country about Najran, a man of greater natural charm than any I met with among the Arabians. He and the high-bred *'Umani Qa'ud* [1] he loved and sat so well were easily the pick of our party; he was well beyond the middle age with a gentle musical voice and pretty mannerisms both of speech and gesture, which always seemed to me the epitome of Arabian manners; his fortitude under suffering amazed me, for when he came to us the skin about the ankle of one foot was disfigured by an open festering sore the size of two crowns, which made any attempt at walking an agony, and to which at our halting-places day after day he himself applied a red-hot iron with more courage than success, for he left us as he came to us with the sore certainly no better. I rejoiced that he at least had his *Qa'ud* to carry him home while Mubarak and Tuwairish, who had ridden postillion to one or other of our party all the way, would have to trudge back homeward as best they could. "God keep you safe," said Hasan at our parting, "and if ever He brings you again to these parts forget not to ask at Sulaiyil for Hasan ibn Ghanim and I will show you the tracks of the oryx in the sands." "In the keeping of God," we replied, and turned abruptly to go our way in the Arabian manner.

The headlands of the secondary escarpment, Sha'b, Farda, Turaifa and Khartam, lay echeloned one behind the other on the flank of our march that day as we skirted along

[1] A male dromedary.

the base of the ridges which end in them on the inner edge of the outer plateau whose rim could be discerned to the westward with the headlands which mark its course—Khashm 'Ajban farthest south of those visible with Humaima and Markhiyya in that order northwards, the latter abreast of the ponderous bluff of Khashm Khartam, which stands at the extremity of a projection of the inner escarpment within two miles at the most of the rim of the outer, and dominates the whole scene. The surface of the plateau was now very rough and beset with tumbled masses of bare downs through which we made our way up a valley called Dahla running down to the Hasraj below the Fuhail hamlet between the Sha'b and Farda ridges. A track diverging westward from our line of march soon after we had cleared the oasis runs across the plateau to the neighbourhood of the Markhiyya headland, where it descends to the plain and strikes across it, a day's journey or more to a salt-pan whence the people of these parts excavate rock-salt found in profusion at a depth of five feet from the surface apparently in the midst of Nafud Dahi.

Passing two small and fantastically carved hillocks projecting from the Sha'b promontory we found the going excellent over the bare loamy soil of the Dahla at whose head or rather in a tributary of it called Nisaj we halted to break our fast under the steep crag of Farda. And so, rising and falling over the rough down-land, we made our way over the Turaifa *Sha'ib*, descending from the headland of that name and another gully called Muhaini to the Khartam defile fully 3000 feet above sea-level, and dominated on one side by the beetling cliff of Khashm Khartam itself whose summit towered about 300 feet sheer above our heads. A more direct route leads from Haddar to Hamar up the side of the cliffs, which flanked our march, and over the high plateau beyond them from which it descends easily near Hamar itself, but this road is only practicable for parties without heavy *impedimenta* and we had to follow the line of least resistance.

The ridge which connects the bluff of Khashm Khartam with the summit of the Markhiyya headland terminates the outer plateau, whose eastern extremity we had been following

so long, and marked our near approach to the point from which northwards the barrier of Tuwaiq assumes a more uniform character, and appears as a plateau gently tilted eastward from its line of highest elevation along the fringe of the western escarpment. But before that point could be reached we had to traverse the Hamar enclave, of which we now obtained a comprehensive view through the gap of the Khartam defile to its farther extremity at the headland of Khashm 'Ashaira, which, like the Khartam headland, impinges directly on the outer cliff. Between these points lay a wedge-shaped plain much broken up by shallow ravines, ridges and hillocks, and based on a line some twenty miles in length along the summit of the western escarpment. Its apex lay at the oasis of Hamar situated about fifteen miles to eastward of this base at the confluence of several drainage channels in a sharp angle formed by the junction of two cliffs running respectively north-east and south-east from the Khartam and 'Ashaira headlands. Henceforth our course lay down the Kiriz channel along the Khartam ridge to Hamar, and thence along the base of the Dhaman cliff, that is along two sides of the triangle of the plain to the 'Ashaira headland, whence we struck eastward over a pass similar to the Khartam defile, and along the 'Ashaira valley almost to the base of the plateau slope and the edge of the Aflaj plain in which it merges.

But before proceeding farther I must deal with the scenery of the Trans-Tuwaiq country, which now burst upon our view as we stood on the summit of the Khartam defile, and of which we had a second and last glimpse as we trailed over the 'Ashaira pass two days later. In the foreground to north and south as far as we could see ran the rugged rim of the outer escarpment broken at intervals by the gaunt masses of its great headlands—'Ajban, Humaima, Markhiyya, Wu'aira, Musaifih, Juwaifa, and Husan far away north of 'Ashaira. Beyond that line was a sharp drop of between 400 and 600 feet to the plain below, a ten-mile strip of scrub desert merging in the soft pink waste of an immense *Nafud*, probably to be identified with, or at any rate to be regarded as forming an integral part of Nafud Dahi, whose northern limit is the line of Wadi

Sirra, while its southern boundary impinges on Wadi Dawasir itself. But far away among or beyond the sands there rose up before us the dim outlines of great mountain ranges, the same, doubtless, which we had viewed to the southward of the pilgrim road on our journey towards the Red Sea, though in a country of such monotonous features as Arabia the identification of peaks and ridges seen from different points of view is always a matter of inference rather than conviction, and I do not place more reliance than it deserves on the information supplied by those who were my guides on this occasion. One of them indeed, 'Uthman, a man of the Nutaifat, who had contracted with us to conduct us to Hamar, was honest enough to warn me that his knowledge of that distant country, which he had himself never visited, depended on the hearsay evidence of Arabs from those parts whom he had accompanied by this very route to Hamar, and was not to be placed in the same category with his knowledge of the nearer landmarks, amid which he had been born and bred. The other, Falih ibn Juhaim, a stout yeoman of Hamar, who observed the fast in all its rigour throughout the day's march on which he accompanied us, and scorned the suggestion that his temporary status as a traveller absolved him from all the obligations of the season, was endowed with greater knowledge of the distant landscape, in the midst of which he had travelled, but was diffident about the accuracy of the identifications to which he committed himself, though he assured me that the great mountain of Sabha was not visible from the 'Ashaira pass, and that the peak which his predecessor had identified with it was not Sabha, but Samakh, southward of Jafar in the Jidd range. The most southerly ranges visible from these points may very probably be those of Suwada and Hasat Qahtan and perhaps also Hadhb Dawasir, while the long low ridge seen immediately behind the *Nafud* may well have been the southward extension of the Ardh uplands in which Quai'iyya lay almost due north-west from Hamar according to my guide. However that may be, it is reasonable to assume that on these occasions I was looking out on that great band of mountainous country, whose farther sides I had looked upon in the

reverse direction from the pilgrim road, and if this was so, I was able to obtain from both sides a sufficiently good general impression of a vast unexplored area, whose details must be left to be filled in by travellers of the future.

The most important of the drainage lines, which converge at the apex of the Hamar enclave to form the gorge of Batin al Hamar as the channel is called from that point onwards to Kharfa and Saih in the Aflaj plain where we had crossed and followed it on our outward journey, is Sha'ib Kiriz, a rock-strewn pebbly strand having its origin on the summit of the Khartam defile and winding tortuously down the sharp descent to the lower ground below it. We followed its course down a rough narrow path to a point where the gradient of the *Sha'ib* became more gentle, and whence it runs eastward along the cliff in a valley averaging half a mile in width and richly covered with scrub and grasses.

For some days now our camels had been sorely tried by the steady marching over the hard surface of the desert-plateau heated by the summer sun and many were showing signs of distress, and particularly of sore feet, their soft pads having a tendency to blister and crack when marching over a hot surface with the result that the inevitable intrusion of rock-splinters and grit into the crevices of the pad renders them lame. Many of the animals were badly affected, and as we were in no great hurry, and were in any case minded to make a full day's halt at Hamar whether we arrived there that night or early next morning, we decided to defer our arrival at the oasis till the morrow, and to utilise the interval in patching up the pads of our beasts, which would also profit by the abundant and excellent grazing of the neighbourhood. The whole of the Kiriz valley, and indeed of the Hamar enclave, constitutes a grazing reserve of the Hamar folk, who are said to have purchased their exclusive rights to these pastures from their former owners, the Nutaifat of Haddar, formerly in the ascendant in these parts, but now prohibited from grazing their cattle therein without the express permission of their now more powerful neighbours. *Bona fide* travelling parties are exempt from such restrictions in the *Hima* or *Hadhr* areas as they are called.

The methods of the Arab in the matter of pad-patching

are primitive enough, though effective, and apparently painless, for having thrown the affected animal on his side and secured his head firmly along his back—thus making all movement impossible—he takes a small patch, generally of camel-hide, a thin thong of the same material and a stout needle, and sews the patch over the cracked part in such manner that the further intrusion into it of foreign bodies is impossible, and the patch gradually wears into and becomes a part of the pad. One after another the camels were treated in this fashion and turned out to graze, the operation being superintended by Tami and Rushaid, who in spite of their love of ease and comfort showed that on occasion they could endure the discomfort of really hard work in the heat of the day in the interests of the common weal. For the rest of us our prolonged stay in this spot was a pleasant change from ceaseless travelling, and I spent the whole afternoon in my tent except for a brief excursion on foot to the summit of the downs which form the left bank of the *Sha'ib*, only, however, to find that the view from it was restricted by the undulations of the plateau on one side and by the Khartam cliff on the other.

Next day we marched down the pebbly bed of the *Sha'ib*, in which we halted for breakfast at the mouth of a small tributary ravine called Umm al Himhim, descending from the downs on our left, which were now beginning to range themselves into a distinct ridge parallel with the cliff of the Khartam. The inner slope of this ridge was covered almost to its summit by a glacis of loose rock-waste and from its flank stood out two fantastically curved hillocks known as Al Faraïd. While breakfast was being prepared I walked to the top of the ridge, which I found littered with a great profusion of fossil oyster and other shells, of which I collected a good number of specimens to bring away with me. I had a similar experience next day on the summit of a hillock overlooking the 'Ashaira pass, and the whole collection arrived safely with me in due course at Riyadh, where unfortunately I had to leave it with the rest of my heavy baggage when I moved up with Ibn Sa'ud for the opening of the campaign against Ibn Rashid in the following August, and where presumably they still are, as all my subsequent efforts to

reclaim my baggage after leaving Arabia have ended in failure. For the time being, therefore, judgment as to the nature of these fossils must be reserved, though it may perhaps be permitted to conjecture that they probably belong to the same geological epoch as other fossils found by me on the Tuwaiq plateau north of Riyadh near the head of Wadi Hanifa, and brought away from there to be examined by the authorities of the British Museum at South Kensington and classed by them as belonging to the Jurassic epoch. Fossils of the same period emanating from some gullies in the Yaman highlands had previously been examined and classified by the same authorities, but this is, so far as I know, the first time that fossils have been brought from any locality in Inner Arabia.[1] Doughty, who found a number of flint implements in Northern Arabia, records that he never came across any fossils in all his wanderings.

Soon after resuming our march down the valley we passed two small pools of water in a wide grassy plain, round which the Khartam cliff makes a wide sweep to the southward, and in which we found a number of red and black kine of the puny local breed grazing. Close by lay the ruins of an old *Qasr* in the midst of a wretched patch of dwarf palms dating back to the former Nutaifat occupation of the district, and soon afterwards we passed another *Qasr* of the same kind called Umm Shajara with a disused well with some very foul water at a depth of about a fathom. At this point one of the Faraïd crags lay close on our left flank, and the valley of the Kiriz narrowed to a width of a quarter-mile between it and the Zuwaira headland projecting from the opposite cliff, over which in this neighbourhood descends the direct road from Haddar locally known as Al Huraitha.

The glacis of the Faraïd ridge now spread out across our path restricting the torrent-bed to narrow limits and we climbed easily over its sloping shoulder to find ourselves at its summit in full view of the oasis of Hamar, a long dark line of palms silhouetted against the grey cliff of the

[1] Since the above was written the missing baggage has been recovered and the whole collection of fossils examined by Mr. R. Buller Newton, extracts from whose report are given in an Appendix to these volumes for the information of those who may be interested in the subject.

Dhaman ridge, and running along the strand of the torrent-bed to the angle formed by the apparent meeting of that and the Khartam cliffs. On the other side of this glacis the broad channel of the Sufaiha *Sha'ib* joins the Kiriz, and beyond that again ran the Dhaman drainage channel, the confluence of the three forming an extensive sandy plain in which the oasis lay spread out before us.

Passing between two mud-walled enclosures containing young palms of recent planting we reached the main belt, and rode between two series of fine groves many of them containing *Qasrs* and other signs of habitation, but the whole settlement appeared to be almost empty of inhabitants, as indeed we found it to be when we reached the fine fort-like residence of the *Amir*, Hadhdhal ibn 'Uqaiyan, on the left bank of the torrent-bed and dismounted to camp for the day.

Except for a few denizens of the place who took no notice of us, and either refused to return our salutations when we met them or returned them in gruff tones full of disgust and disapproval, and Falih ibn Juhaim, a representative of the *Amir*, left behind to receive us and provide for our wants, the population had fled. In spite of Ibrahim's strictest injunctions to the contrary and probably with the intention of making his path—and incidentally our own—as rough as possible, Jabir and 'Ubaid, smarting under a sense of injustice in the manner of their abrupt dismissal from the Wadi, had spread tales of the coming of an infidel in the villages through which they had passed, and the villages received the news each in its own way. The people of Haddar had not thought it necessary to disturb the even tenor of their lives on our account, and had exhibited no obvious sign of disapproval of our coming ; but here different counsels had prevailed, and Hadhdhal, the *Amir*, doubtless considering it imprudent to challenge the entry of a party travelling under the *aegis* of Ibn Sa'ud, had hit upon the alternative of evacuating the oasis with all his people in preference to remaining in it to receive us. This they had done in the most effectual manner, betaking themselves according to Falih, in spite of the inconvenience to them of being away from their homes during the *Ramdhan* fast,

to the little oasis of Wasit, situated in the gorge of the Batin al Hamar a dozen miles or so downstream of Hamar itself near the fringe of the Aflaj plain, whence they would not return until the unwelcome visitation was overpast.

The disapproval of the rest found expression in their refusal to sell to us such necessaries as we required, but we found no difficulty in circumventing this attitude of theirs by making all our purchases through Falih, who had apparently made up his mind to make the best of a bad job by being extremely attentive and helpful to us—for which he was suitably rewarded.

While our tents were being pitched I joined Ibn Jilham and a few others of the party in a shady nook of the absent *Amir's* splendid palm-grove, where under the shade of the intertwined foliage of many and various fruit-trees we drank coffee, and rested and conversed appropriately enough on the subject of Paradise, a place of which the *Wahhabis* have very definite and entirely anthropomorphic conceptions, believing most sincerely that there, themselves grown to enormous physical proportions, they will enjoy all manner of delights forbidden or inaccessible to them in this earthly state. It was with something of a shock that I realised that Ibn Jilham, his three-score years notwithstanding, or his great experience of the vanities of this world, looked forward with complete satisfaction to his rapidly approaching translation to that state of bliss, in which he would be able to renew with redoubled energy those joys of this world which were already becoming memories of a well-spent past.

Tradition has it that the first settlers of Hamar were a branch of the Daud section of the Qahtan who were dispossessed of the oasis by two warriors of the Shakara [1] section of the Dawasir—Dhafar and Idris by name, uncles of 'Uqaiyan, father of Zaid, father of Hadhdhal the present *Amir*. The oasis like that of Wasit is owned exclusively by the Shakara, numbering some 600 souls all told, not including the *Badawin* element, which may number as many more without any proprietary share in the palm-groves of the two settlements, and with a separate organ-

[1] *Vide* p. 108 *supra*.

isation under the headship of 'Aqab ibn Hufaidh, a chief of some note, who in the general tribal councils appears to take precedence of Hadhdhal himself, and to exercise some degree of authority over him and the settled section.

The palm-groves, in which are embedded a single large hamlet near the middle and a number of scattered *Qasrs*, extend with an average breadth of a quarter-mile for a length of one mile and a half along the *Sha'ib*, ending abruptly at the beginning of the Batin al Hamar gorge, in which about half a mile farther on lies the ruined and deserted double hamlet of Muwaisil, surrounded by patches of *Ithil* and some cornfields. The people of Hamar used to inhabit this site but have abandoned it recently though they still cultivate the corn-land about it. The groves of the oasis are of very prosperous appearance containing a rich undergrowth of fruit-trees and vegetables—pomegranates, which we now saw again for the first time since leaving the Aflaj plain, peaches, lemons, cotton-plants, a sort of scarlet-runner trained up the palm-trunks, egg-plants and chillies. I noticed no sign of vines, and it is worthy of remark that the pomegranate bushes were bare of fruit, for in these parts they gather the fruit while yet unripe for the preparation from its husk of a yellowish-brown dye, much used in the dyeing of female garments, and none of it is left to ripen for eating purposes. The oasis is certainly far richer and more compact than that of Haddar, which seems to have declined in prosperity in proportion as Hamar has flourished within the memory of the present generation. The wells here have a depth of from seven to thirteen fathoms, varying according to situation and season, while the local live-stock comprises a small number of cattle and large flocks of goats, but apparently no sheep, the goats being shorn for their hair, which is used for the making of tents and cloth, in contrast to the practice in the north where they shear only the sheep.

From the lower extremity of the oasis a track leads up a narrow gully to the crest of the Dhaman ridge whence it strikes in a bee-line across the plateau enclosed between that ridge and the right bank of the 'Ashaira valley to the settlement of Sitara our next stage on the homeward journey.

But this path had been rendered impracticable by a small landslide, which had taken place during the last rains and had been left unrepaired, and I was not sorry that we had on this account to fetch a circuit by way of the head of the 'Ashaira valley. Our path next day lay along the drainage channels [1] washing the base of the Dhaman cliff, following the Quai'iyya track, which is also the main route of pilgrims from the Aflaj province, to the point at which it descends over the cliff of the western escarpment along the rocky bed of the Juwaifa *Sha'ib*.

This gully was well worth the trouble of the slight detour which we made to see it—a magnificent cleft in the rock-wall being lined on either side by huge boulders, some of which were poised in delicate balance on precarious ledges or slopes of loose rubble, and seemed in imminent danger of hurtling to the depths of the gully some 300 or 400 feet below. The downward track runs along the dry bed of the watercourse, descending rapidly from ledge to ledge to a bushy and ever-broadening valley at whose mouth the Juwaifa headland and another, nameless and less splendid, stood sentinel. Here, they told me, in the old days of the Turkish occupation of Najd—perhaps a decade or two after the capture of Dara'iyya—a small Arab force had held up and driven back with heavy losses a Turkish detachment sent down to curb the independent spirit of the denizens of Aflaj.

Hitherto I had imagined that the flow of the drainage of the plain beyond the Tuwaiq cliff was southward towards Wadi Dawasir, but I now found by enquiry that the slope is towards the north, the waters which run down over the edge of the plateau coursing in that direction by a broad and shallow channel to merge eventually in Wadi Sirra at the point where it changes its name to Wadi Birk, and flows eastward through the barrier. The divide between the northward and southward drainages appears to lie somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Khashm 'Ajban headland, the edge of the *Nafud* being, so far as I could judge, about ten miles distant across the intervening plain.

Breakfast was now disposed of and we resumed our march

[1] The Ma'aidhar, Nidar, Dhaman, Sudair and Abul Safi.

up the Abul Safi *Sha'ib* to its head in the 'Ashaira pass, on whose surface of crumbled limestone and sandstone I found, as already stated, a great profusion of fossils. The pass breaks the line of the Dhaman cliff, whose crags towered splendidly some 300 feet above our heads on either side, and leads across it into the 'Ashaira valley, trending eastward between buttressed banks about half a mile apart, and varying between 100 and 300 feet above the general level of the trough. About a day's journey or less northward of this point and in a tributary ravine, which joins the 'Ashaira downstream of the Ghail oasis, lies the settlement of Haradha, a small hamlet embedded in palms, as they told me, and peopled by a colony of the Qubabina section of the Suhul [1]—not more than fifty souls all told.

We now followed the course of a winding torrent-bed of sand and pebbles down the middle of the valley, and made our midday halt three miles lower down where the vegetation of grasses and acacias was thickest, and just above a bend, which concealed from our view the beginnings of an abandoned settlement of former days, broken granges encircled by derelict fields once cultivated by their occupants, and ruined wells, a few of which still contained water and now formed the centre of a small *Badawin* encampment of Qahtan shepherds eking out the misery of a day of fasting against the setting of the sun. Such was Jidawiyya. We did not know it was inhabited until we came upon the black tents of the *Badawin*, some fifteen of them concealed in a coppice of thorny acacias in a sheltered nook of the valley, but it soon became evident that our presence in their neighbourhood was not unknown to the Arabs. Jabir had blazoned abroad the news of the coming of an infidel, and our arrival at our midday camp had been noted by watchers on the hill-sides.

Our baggage animals, having been sent off ahead in the afternoon, had almost passed the encampment, when Ibrahim, Falih and I, riding in the van of the main body, noticed unwonted activity among the tents, men rushing to and fro without apparent motive. We steered well away from the tents hugging the opposite bank of the valley,

[1] Sing. *Sahli*.

but all our precautions were in vain—thanks to our friends. Before long we heard the voice of Mitrak in the rear raised in angry vituperation, to which there came heated replies from the *Badawin*, and as I turned in my saddle to see what was amiss, I saw the slave 'Abdulrazzaq riding at a gallop towards the tents, unhitching his rifle and drawing his sword as he went. What he hoped to achieve by this quixotic adventure I never discovered, but in a moment, as he slipped with more courage than good sense from the saddle, the infuriated *Badu* were upon him, rolling him in the dust, and reason departed from among us. With one accord the whole of our party galloped off to the rescue leaving me bewildered in the midst of the *Hamla* with a slave-girl as my sole companion—the niece of one of the followers found the previous day at Hamar, and now accompanying her uncle back to Riyadh, having recently been bereft of her parents. I turned to her for counsel, but for answer she pointed resignedly towards the tents, where an amazing scene was being enacted—a scene fraught with tragic possibilities, which I, at any rate, was powerless to avert.

The population of the tents—man, woman and child—had swarmed out, like angered wasps from a nest carelessly disturbed by a passer-by, towards my companions, and a battle of words was taking place, in which the shrill ululations of the women mixed weirdly with the hoarse tones of the men, while female forms flitted in and out among brandished swords and loaded rifles. It seemed inevitable that the sharp crack of a rifle would transform the burlesque scene into tragedy, and my companions, though better armed, were at a disadvantage in the matter of numbers.

Such storms, however, are, so far as my own experience goes, as short-lived as they are violent while they last. The argument suddenly came to an end with the exhaustion of available expletives and the combatants drew apart, each side satisfied with a moral victory. Ibrahim led his champions back in triumph to the camels, and then only did I have an opportunity of enquiring the reason of so meaningless an outbreak of ill-temper, and of expostulating with our leaders for the folly which had led us so near to

the brink of a catastrophe. "*Wallah*," said Mitrak in explanation of his conduct, "those folk knew of our coming from Jabir and saw us pitch our tents at noon in the *Sha'ib*; and when the *Hamla* passed by their tents they cursed them for the presence of an infidel. That is why I shouted at them to beware how they insulted Ibn Sa'ud's followers and they replied: 'The curse of God be upon you all for infidels, you yourselves, and Ibn Sa'ud with you.' Then did 'Abdulrazzaq ride upon them and you saw what happened." I protested that they had no call to take note of childish abuse of that kind, or to mind the yapping of every cur they met. "*Wallah*," they replied, "such people become bold if you leave them in their folly; they had doubtless waited till we were past and had fired upon us from behind had we not attacked them as we did. And now they are afraid that we will speak against them and have them punished by Ibn Affaisan."

They were nevertheless a little shamefaced about the matter and I declared myself unconvinced by their argument, whereupon the subject was dropped, though in true Arab fashion they continued to revert to it with angry mutterings from time to time during the rest of the day. For myself I confess that I still retain an open mind as to whether their action was right or wrong in the circumstances, though it seems to me unlikely that the *Badawin* would have pursued a body so well armed as ourselves had we completely ignored their idle abuse.

The valley now narrowed to a quarter-mile and its banks became lower and less precipitous, the plateau on either side being scored by the shallow troughs of tributary ravines.[1] Here and there lay a ruined grange or well beside our path, which passed through some abandoned fields round the well of Hafira into the plantation of Mulaiji, a very thin line of palms, some 300 in all, extending for about a mile down the valley with a great profusion of *Tarfa* bushes and the broad-leaved wild-fig[2] particularly at the junction of the Hanwa gully with the main *Sha'ib*.

[1] *Sha'ibs* Minhaj, Malwi, Dahina, Hanwa and Quburiyya in that order as we progressed downstream.

[2] *Hamāt*.

Scarcely a mile beyond this point we entered the oasis of Sitara to camp for the night under the walls of the petty fort-like hamlet which houses the majority of its inhabitants. We had done an unusually long march, perhaps nearly thirty miles, rendered agreeable enough by the mild temperature and a pleasant northerly breeze, and were glad enough to find no disposition on the part of the people to repeat the hostility which we had experienced during the afternoon.

The torrent-bed, here broad and sandy, sweeps through the oasis in a wide semicircle with palm-groves of considerable density on either side both above and below the hamlet, which stands on a low eminence on the left bank opposite the densest section of the groves occupying a deep embayment at the middle point of the convex part of the curve. It is at this point that the direct track from Hamar descends from the plateau into the valley. Seen from upstream the graceful curve of the oasis, together with the hamlet itself—a veritable little fortress of oblong shape and about 100 yards in length and sixty yards in breadth with eight turrets and three unimposing gates—and the shady palm-groves on either hand, form as delightful a bit of rural scenery as may be found in these parts. A single *Qasr* in one of the groves is the only habitation outside the hamlet, and the total population of the place can scarcely exceed about fifty souls, though at the time of our visit the torrent-bed was dotted with groups of *Badawin* encamped in the oasis for the period of the fast. The permanent population apparently consisted wholly of the family and personal retainers of the local *Amir*, 'Abdullah ibn Dhib, a man of high reputation among the Qubabina of whom some 200 persons are dependent on him and on the produce of the oasis.

The oasis extends in all about one and a half miles along the torrent-bed, its convex edge being backed by a low cliff about fifty yards high, while the opposite bank of the valley consists of a series of low hillocks forming an undulating down. The groves have little to boast of in the way of undergrowth, but I noticed some pomegranate bushes, wild-figs and vines, the latter trained on trellises over the mouths of the wells.

We were now rapidly approaching the end of the 'Ashaira valley and a short march of about twelve miles brought us on the following day to Ghail, a very prosperous settlement situated in its lowest reaches at a point just above its debouchment into the Aflaj plain. Below Sitara the valley extends in parts to a breadth of above a mile, but there was little of outstanding interest in its course. Three or four dwarf palms and as many ruined wells are all that remain of the former settlement of Junaina, beyond which we passed the mouth of a tributary *Sha'ib*, Samran by name, whose source was said to be in the neighbourhood of Khashm Husan. Below this point the high ground on the left bank projects in a narrow tongue of weather-worn rock, which divides the valley into two extensive circular plains largely overlaid by the accumulated silt of ages and connected by a narrow passage, through which the torrent-bed itself runs. The rock, which provides shelter from the sun under its overhanging ledges, is known by the name of Abu Didi and is said to have been an object of worship to the inhabitants of the country in the days of the "Ignorance." This is the only case I ever came across personally of a relic of the times of idolatry, and there seemed to me little enough to recommend the rock to the attention of its visitors except only the fact that its recesses formed welcome refuges from the sun.

Immediately below the rock we came upon the first outliers of the Ghail oasis, ruined *Qasrs* and the fields about them dotting the valley for nearly three miles from this point to the beginning of the palm-groves of the oasis proper. The ruinous state of these habitations and the absence of stubble in the fields were, however, sufficient evidence of the decay which has overtaken a settlement once remarkable both for its extent and prosperity, and it seemed to me that many years must have passed since any considerable part of this tract has produced a crop, though according to Falih desultory cultivation of parts of it is attempted by the more enterprising spirits of Ghail whenever satisfactory rainfall and floods render such a proceeding possible. Through it the storm channel runs in a deep bed about twenty yards wide and at least ten feet below the surface

of the land on either side, and it would seem that, while only floods of exceptional volume would be capable of flushing the fields, the cause of the decline of this tract has been the steady raising of the level of the valley by the deposition of silt by passing floods.

A few black tents of the Matara *Badawin* dotted the scene of desolation until, rounding a bend of the valley, we came into view of the oasis of Ghail, a dense forest of palms blocking the whole space between the precipitous limestone cliffs on either side of the gorge. The torrent-bed disappeared into its midst while the track ran along a ledge of rock at the base of the cliff forming the left bank of the depression. The first patch of cultivation we came to was a small grove of palms heavily laden with unripe fruit with a ruined grange in the middle of it, beyond which we saw at the other end of a clearing a large ruined fort with a tall detached watch-tower forming the upstream defences of the settlement. Beyond these lay the palm-groves of the oasis, some 300 yards across from side to side and flanked by cliffs rising to a height of 100 feet. A rough masonry bridge led us over the mouth of a narrow tributary gully and the track now took us through the heart of the oasis along the main torrent-bed to the hamlet of Badi'a, near which we pitched our tents in a small clearing under the steep cliff of the right bank.

From the summit of this cliff I obtained a splendid view of the oasis and its surroundings. Below me lay the dense mass of palm-groves extending in an unbroken line down the valley for a length of nearly two miles and with an average breadth of about 300 yards from the watch-tower already mentioned on the upstream side to a similar tower at the lower extremity where the gorge makes a sharp bend to the southward. On a higher level the desolate plateau extended on all sides with a sharp eastward incline towards the Aflaj plain, in which it merges imperceptibly at no great distance from this spot. The plain itself bordered in the far distance by the outer ridge of the Biyadh wilderness was clearly visible, but it was difficult owing to the dust haze which enveloped the scene to make out its details. The rough country in the neighbourhood of

the 'Ars and Mira *Sha'ibs* was, however, visible to the eastward with its motley jumble of black and white ridges, but the Aflaj oases were scarcely discernible or discernible only as dark splashes of cultivation difficult of exact identification.

The oasis of Ghail, so called from the presence in its midst of a perennial brook cropping up in the bed of the storm channel and flowing steadily though with no great volume through the length of the plantations until exhausted by the demands made on its supply by the cultivators, contains three hamlets—'Amaïr in the palms at the upstream end with a population of about 150 souls; Badi'a, a group of three hamlets on the left bank of the running stream and in the densest part of the oasis with a population of 300 persons, including the local *Amir*, who lives in the central and largest of the three hamlets; and Mishrif in two small sections about a quarter-mile downstream of Badi'a but nearer to the right bank of the valley with a population of 100 souls. Apart from these hamlets the groves contain in all about a dozen detached *Qasrs*, one of which occupies a commanding position half-way up the cliff of the left bank and overlooking Badi'a. The whole population of the settlement may number about 700 persons, the main part of whom are Bani Khadhir tenants holding and cultivating the groves of the oasis on lease from the Qubabina owners, who prefer the nomad life and resort to Ghail only during the *Ramdhan* fast and at the date harvest. The recognised head of all branches of this section is Nasir ibn Shukait, under whose general control the tribal interests within the oasis itself are left to the care of Hamad ibn Thallab, who had on a recent occasion incurred the displeasure of Ibn Sa'ud, and had been brought to a proper sense of the responsibilities of his office and position by a period of incarceration at Laila. Neither Nasir nor Hamad was present in the settlement at the time of our visit, but the latter was momentarily expected back as he had announced his intention of spending the month of *Ramdhan* at home. He had, however, got wind of our coming and, remembering the punishment which had overtaken him on the previous occasion when he had defied the authority of his sovereign, had taken the precaution to warn his subjects of their duties

of hospitality towards us. Whether it was owing to this warning or the naturally hospitable nature of the denizens of Ghail I cannot say, but I record with gratitude the fact that we were on arrival accorded a more than cordial reception, the women of Badi'a turning out to greet us as we passed through the hamlet with blessings on Ibn S'aud, while the children made merry in the streets and, when we came to camp, our wants in the matter of provisions and fodder were attended to with great promptitude. The dates of Ghail, mainly of the *Siri* variety, are of excellent quality, and they brought me a basket of grapes—the first I had tasted in Arabia, but not the last or the best, for these were the first-fruits of the season, sour little unripe berries of no merit except that they were fresh fruit. The wells of Ghail are about six fathoms in depth—those of Sitara were not more than four—but it is to its running water that the oasis owes both its name and its great prosperity.

Next morning we resumed our march, recrossing the brook and climbing by a steep and difficult ascent up the cliff-side and past the *Qasr* already noted to the summit of the plateau, whence I enjoyed a hazy view of the Aflaj plain and of its oases—Kharfa, Laila and the rest—far distant in a south-easterly direction. Our course was now once more set to the northward over the desolate wilderness, which forms the eastern extremity of the Tuwaiq plateau and merges imperceptibly in the higher levels of the plateau on the one hand and in the rough down-lands of the Rajd tract on the other. Here and there we had glimpses of the landmarks of our outward journey, but the scene around us was as featureless as it was boundless, and the day was one of the dullest days of my sojourn in Arabia.

The monotonous surface of the rolling down-tract was interrupted at intervals by ravines crossing our path, the first two, namely the Mulaizi and Haradha *Sha'ibs*, being tributaries of the 'Ashaira, which they join before it reaches the plain, and which incidentally is the same drainage channel as that which runs through the settlement of Wusaila. Beyond these we crossed two small ravines,[1] tributaries of the deep gorge of Umm al Jurf, which in turn is the parent

[1] Sha'ib Sumairin and a nameless channel.

of the twin channels of 'Ars and Mira of the Rajd plain, and into which we dropped after three hours' marching. The descent into this broad clay-covered depression was rough but not very steep, but the opposite bank was a precipitous wall of rock with a narrow difficult path up its face, towards which we were making when the sharp crack of a rifle, apparently fired in our direction, rang out, echoing and re-echoing from side to side of the arena formed by the cliffs around us. For a moment there was no explanation of the occurrence and no sign far and wide of humanity outside ourselves; caution was necessary lest we might be exposing ourselves to an ambush, but just as a council was collected to consider the situation Tami came up from the rear with the news that, having sighted a solitary man in the distance, he had shouted to him to come near, whereupon the stranger had fired a shot by way of warning and had taken to his heels.

Such are the constant alarms of desert travelling. Ravine [1] after ravine we crossed, wending wearily over the wilderness, our camels in spite of the short march and long rest of the previous day showing signs of exhaustion. The long low ridge of blackened rock along Sha'ib Ghina showed up well on our right as also a conical hillock by the 'Ars, but there was little of interest to beguile us, and we were glad to call a halt for the night in a nameless depression of the plateau, our decision to do so being determined by the information that the Warhiyya wells, for which we were making, were occupied by numerous *Badawin* groups—Dawasir, Qahtan, Qubabina and others—and the reflection that it was unwise to take unnecessary risks by spending the night in their midst.

Early the following morning we entered and followed for some distance the broad depression of Sha'ib Dara'i, whose lower reaches [2] we had crossed on the outward march, and out of which we again ascended on to the plateau to enjoy a view as wide and uninspiring as that which we had had throughout the previous day. The Insalah tract now appeared not far off on our right and the flat surface

[1] Sha'ibs Hanshaliyya, Sudairat, a nameless tributary of the latter and the Umm Hisha.

[2] Known as Sha'ib Daiya; *vide* p. 65 *supra*.

of the plateau itself degenerated into low undulating downs on either side of another broad sandy *Sha'ib*, known as Ghulghul and forming a tributary of the Dara'i. We reached this depression by a long easy descent to find it tenanted by the flocks and herds of numerous *Badawin* gathered round the two wells of Warhiyya. They proved to be Qahtan of the Shirin section, who, having occupied the site all night and practically completed the watering of their flocks, obligingly made way for us, but no sooner were we installed than a large party of the Qubabina on the march from the watering of Ba'aija farther north to Ghail appeared over the sky-line of the ridge, which forms the left bank of the valley, and advanced towards us. A *Badawin* tribe on the march is always a splendid sight, and these were no exception to the rule, the party consisting of some thirty men heading the procession on gaily caparisoned *Dhaluls* and perhaps 100 or more women and children riding in their weird carriages or on the loads of the baggage animals with half-a-dozen watch-dogs in attendance. The women were all clad in red smocks with black veils about their heads, but otherwise seemed to enjoy complete liberty of movement among the men and had, of course, to bear the lion's share of the work that ensued upon the arrival of the party at the wells—the pitching of tents, the sorting of the luggage, and tasks of that nature—while the men disposed themselves in comfortable circles, making coffee and conversing until such time as the watering should be at their disposal. The head of the party, one Hamad, a near kinsman of Ibn Thallab, the *Amir* of Ghail, came over to our tents to offer his services to us and made himself more than ordinarily agreeable to me. When we had conversed awhile he insisted on accompanying me to the well, where I found many of his men helping my companions to water our camels. One of them jokingly asked me if I proposed to " write up " the well, for it is commonly held among the Arabs that foreigners, who visit their country, do so for no other purpose than to record its wonders, and in this they do not greatly err.

Of the two wells, which form the Warhiyya group, one is completely choked up with sand to the level of the masonry structure which encircles its mouth, while the other reaches

to a depth of five fathoms, being unlined but furnished with a circle of rough stone-blocks round the top. The heavy demands made upon this well tend to keep its water-supply low, but water is plentiful enough in the sandy soil at its base, and wells up as soon as it is left alone, while a little scratching in the sand is sufficient to increase the supply temporarily. The water is of excellent quality both here and in a less permanent watering situated some three miles lower down the valley near its junction with the Dara'i and known as Qalha.

When the Araïf pretender [1] rose against Ibn Sa'ud and fled before his advance with a following of notables from Hauta and Hariq, the tracks of his force were followed past this spot to the wells of Mishash al 'Ars, where the pursuers halted on their way to Laila. I have already recorded [2] how the folk of that town gave up the fugitives to Ibn Sa'ud and witnessed the execution of nineteen of the ringleaders of the conspiracy, including seven of the chief citizens of Hariq, men of the Hazazina section of the 'Anaza. Near by these wells I noticed a considerable cemetery under the right bank of the *Sha'ib*, but I could not discover whether it contained the remains of men fallen in any particular battle or merely of those who had fallen by the way in the neighbourhood of the watering.

When we resumed our march, rested and refreshed, we passed out of the *Sha'ib* on to the bordering uplands and so out of the Aflaj province into the district of Al Fara', for the Ghulghul and a tributary of it called Na'dh Ghulghul, which we followed for some distance to the divide between the latter and the valley of Na'dh Ba'aija, are the most northerly drainage channels in this tract which do not contribute their annual quota of flood water to the great 'Ajaimi but, being tributaries of the Dara'i, find their way to the Daiya and so in due course southward towards the Aflaj plain and the Biyadh desert behind it.

4. The District of Al Fara'

The names of Hauta and Hariq are writ large in the annals of Najd, but the name of the district, of which they

[1] *Vide* Vol. I. p. 102.

[2] *Vide* p. 78 *supra*.

are the chief settlements, had hitherto eluded the inquisition of European geographers, and the compiler of the official Handbook of Arabia was wise to be cautious in summarising the scanty but conflicting information on the subject at his disposal. "Whether these are two districts or one," he says, "under either or some other name, and whether, if two, the districts properly bear these names, which are certainly those also of their chief towns, are open questions." Palgrave had gone wildly astray in locating the district somewhere on the fringe of the Great South Desert on the evidence of his own eyes,[1] but the official compiler, rejecting the testimony of the only available eye-witness in favour of second-hand descriptions of the country, has placed the tract on the map in exactly the position it does in fact occupy in relation to Kharj and 'Aridh, that is to say, west of the former and south of the latter, but he in turn goes wrong in placing it south of Aflaj, following Palgrave in preference to Lorimer, who on the basis of much enquiry from Arab visitors to the Persian Gulf had advanced a correct view of the relative positions of the two districts.

The name of the district is Al Fara' or the Valley *par excellence*, its central feature being the deep gorge of Majma', which also forms its northern boundary, and at either end of which in its course through the uplands of Tuwaiq lie the great oasis settlements of Hariq and Hauta. North of that line lies the section of Tuwaiq known as 'Aridh, whose south-western portion is overspread by the lofty masses of 'Alaiya, the most elevated section of the whole plateau and the source of the torrents which have created the two great oases. Extending over the whole breadth of Tuwaiq from west to east, a distance perhaps of thirty miles, the district runs for about fifty miles from north to south, where it marches with the Aflaj uplands along the divide between the Ba'aija and Dara'i drainages. It would seem, therefore, to cover an area of about 1500 square miles of the most rugged and bleakest scenery in Central Arabia, of whose physical and human aspects, if one may compare a part with the whole, it presents an almost complete epitome —an epitome far from complimentary and not altogether

[1] W. G. P. vol. ii. p. 128.

just though intensely suggestive, for it is here that we find the ancient race of Bani Tamim at its best and worst—a proud fanatical race of sturdy yeoman farmers more than content with their isolation from the world around them, whose standards of honour and hospitality they contemptuously reject, seeking in turn nothing but that which they may purchase with the products of their own toil. They are classed with the villagers of 'Aridh among the best fighting-men of Arabia; they are devout *Wahhabis* of the old type and proud of their loyalty to the head of the *Wahhabi* state—a loyalty of which they gave proof in the days of the *Rashidian* occupation by publicly chastising in the market-place of Hauta a tax-collector of the usurper's administration who was rash enough to appear in their midst with a demand for the payment of their dues to the State treasury. The district of Al Fara' maintained its independence throughout that troubled period and, when the throne of Riyadh was recovered for the rightful dynasty by the cadet branch of the Sa'ud family, Hauta and Hariq made no secret of their sympathy with the senior branch, and threw in their lot with it in the bid for power which culminated in the tragedy of the Laila executions. Ibn Sa'ud was not the man to leave open the door for future dissensions by allowing a direct challenge to his authority to pass unnoticed, and his rapid descent upon Hariq, followed by his energetic pursuit of the fugitives down the valley through Hauta, rank in local estimation among the great military exploits of his reign. The standard of revolt was raised by Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul'aziz ibn Sa'ud, the great pretender, at Hariq with the cognisance and support of its inhabitants. Hariq was sacked and burned for its disobedience, and even Hauta trembled at the threat of a similar punishment in the event of its opposition to the outraged monarch. There was no opposition, and the final quelling of the rebellion was characteristically followed by generous treatment of the offending district by Ibn Sa'ud, who offered the people complete self-government according to their own lights within their own sphere in return for the recognition of his title to rule the land, the punctual payment of taxes and the provision of a contingent for the armed forces of the

realm. That arrangement has been faithfully observed by both parties since its ratification, and the settlements of Al Fara' are at the present day not less proud of their allegiance to the ruler of Wahhabiland than of the privilege, which they enjoy, of conducting their own affairs through *Amirs* of their own choosing and of their own people.

But no one has better reason than Ibn Sa'ud to know the character of the denizens of this tract, and it was for no idle caprice that, when bidding me farewell, he warned me that, while I might wander where I would throughout the length and breadth of his territories, I should avoid the district of Al Fara'. That injunction, repeated in my presence to Ibrahim, I had accepted as the explicit wish of my host and the sole restriction on my liberty of movement, but Ibrahim had in an evil moment—by way of compensation for other misdemeanours—tempted me with an offer to conduct me into the forbidden land and I had fallen through excess of curiosity to see something of that country, of whose people they spoke with bated breath. Moreover, in the hope of keeping the controller of my movements to the promise he had given, I had meekly suffered further misdemeanours on his part at Wadi Dawasir, and at this moment, even as we crossed the Aflaj frontier into the forbidden district, I found myself agitated by suspense lest Ibrahim might have forgotten a promise, of which I had hitherto refrained from reminding him in accordance with the condition of silence which he had imposed on me at the time of making it.

I had of course no idea of the exact position of the Fara' settlements, and it seemed to me that our course was taking us too far to the east towards the 'Ajaimi valley, leaving the Tuwaiq uplands on our left. In these circumstances I took courage that same evening to broach the matter to Ibrahim, and the queer look that flashed across his face at the mention of his promise convinced me that I had correctly gauged his intention of playing me false. "Did not Ibn Sa'ud," he said, "warn us at our setting out to avoid Hariq and Hauta?" "True," I replied, "but did not you yourself promise to take me to those places, declaring that Ibn Sa'ud merely meant that we should not halt in their midst?

Did you not promise that when we came near to Hariq we should send the *Hamla* ahead of us by night and ourselves, awaiting the dawn, ride rapidly through Hariq and down the *Sha'ib* to and through Hauta, declaring that the people of those places would never note anything amiss in us?" "*Wallah*," he urged, "if we wanted to do that, we should not have followed the track by which we have come, but should have followed the cliff of Tuwaiq on the other side until we came to the pass leading up to Hariq, but, when we were at the Wadi, you said you wanted to see Hamar and Haddar and we could not have done both." "Ibrahim," I said, "you have deceived me, and in all things you have served me ill all through this journey; we have time enough to fetch a circuit through those places, but the matter is in your hands, and all I can say is this: if I see not the towns of Al Fara' according to your promise, I shall have no more to do with you from the moment we reach Riyadh. Till then you are in charge of our movements and I will say no more."

I now felt that Ibrahim, knowing my opinion of his attempted deception, would try to redeem his promise in part at any rate, for we had now gone too far to make its fulfilment as a whole possible, and in this view I was not mistaken, but I must not anticipate the course of events. The torrent strand of Na'dh Ba'aija pursuing a winding course through a gap between the tumbled downs on either side came to an end in the neighbourhood of a prominent cone of rock called Ruba', where it joins the gorge of Ahmara, a great trough, whose head lies far back in the uplands of western Tuwaiq and which constitutes the upper reach within the plateau of the Ba'aija *Sha'ib*, whose point of junction with the Halfawi at the head of the 'Ajaimi valley we had passed more than a month earlier when southward bound.

The Ahmara valley, flanked on either side by great bluffs like buttresses supporting the walls of the plateau, runs generally in a north-easterly direction from the point at which we had entered it and is profusely covered with rough desert scrub and many trees of *Talh* and other acacias and the broom-like *Markh*. Here and there it is blocked

by extensive masses of accumulated silt, standing ten feet high or more, through which runs the torrent-bed of sand and pebbles, sweeping in fine curves round shoulders of rock projecting from the side-buttresses. At intervals the cliffs on either side recede in shallow bays to receive the drainage of the higher ground behind in small tributary *Sha'ibs.*[1]

At a distance of about five miles down its course we came to the well of Ba'aija, round which lay some fifty black tents of the Qubabina *Badawin* gathered here from the surrounding pastures in preparation for a march on the following day towards Ghail. Our sudden appearance round a bend of the valley caused no excitement among the tenants of the tents, who knew full well that to reach that point we must have passed through valleys and uplands infested by their own people, and passing by the well—a single shaft of fifteen fathoms' depth and blessed with abundant and excellent water—round which were gathered about a hundred camels and innumerable sheep for the evening's watering, we dismounted apart and pitched our tents for the night. Hamad ibn Thallab, the *Amir* of Ghail, was here in person and not only sent us a friendly offering of two sheep for our dinner but came over after the meal for a chat and a round or two of coffee over our camp-fire. We had been joined at dinner by three individuals of the Shakara Dawasir seeking news of their own homes, whence they had been absent in the pastures for several months, and I had unfortunately retired to my tent to write or read as soon as they had taken their leave—thus missing Hamad, whose cordiality I heard praised next day and explained by the fact of his recent castigation by Ibn Sa'ud. To govern a country like Arabia is no light task, a task to which the exchange of hard knocks is an inevitable preliminary, and he alone can control such a country, who knows how to heal the wounds he must inflict. Such an one without any shadow of doubt is Ibn Sa'ud, and the proof of his success lies in the long tale of former enemies converted to loyal friendship not by gifts or gentle dealing but by the merciless visitation of his

[1] Sumairiyya above the Ba'aija well and Musaidir, Umm al Faraid, 'Ubairan and Umm Tulaiha below it.

wrath on the wrongdoer and the generous pardon of offences once punished.

Next day we followed the valley down to the point at which, rapidly widening between banks decreasing in height, it pours forth on to the 'Ajaimi plain through the angle formed by the Insalah downs and the gentle outer slope of Tuwaiq. A short halt for breakfast in a sandy *Sha'ib* called Umm al Ramal was followed by a resumption of the march over a lower shoulder of the plateau projecting into the plain, from whose summit we beheld spread out before us the upper valley of the 'Ajaimi, the vast circular basin of our earlier wanderings with the conspicuous landmarks of Khashm Khartam and the headland of Niswan in the far distance at its extremities.

We now skirted along the edge of the Tuwaiq slope, marching easily over a firm "*pat*" surface and across the upper reaches of Sha'ib Tilha near the point of its debouchment from its upland ravine on to the plain, and headed for a wide bay running up into the plateau and bounded on either side by low bare ridges. This embayment, whose mouth was separated from the plain by a broad tongue of sand, turned out to be the valley of the Birk, forming a wide wedge with its apex at the point where the *Wadi* ceases to run between precipitous cliffs and splaying out to a base line perhaps a mile in length at the point where the valley joins the plain. There was in this trough no evidence of a permanent storm channel, but it is probable that in the rainy season the flood spreads across the whole wedge sweeping towards the plain, where its waters gradually contract in a natural runnel and carve out in its bottom the torrent-bed of sand and rocks which I had seen far out in the plain.

Moving up the valley towards its apex we camped under the shade of some great *Sarha* trees hard by a series of ponds now completely dry and known as Maz'ab. To get a better view of the surrounding country I went out to a low hillock close by, where as I scanned the scene I myself was observed by a *Baduwi* searching for a lost camel. Wondering whether I had been guilty of betraying our whereabouts to the watchers of a raiding gang I beat a hasty retreat to our camp pursued by the Arab, on whose arrival in our midst I was

relieved to find that it was only his camel that he was searching for and seeing me engaged on an apparently similar quest had jumped to the conclusion that having found a camel I was searching out the land for its lost owner. He left us after partaking of refreshment to continue his search.

Scarcely a mile separated us now from the apex of the wedge, where a dry pond called Thaqab Haid marked the eastern extremity of the long cliff-bound channel in which the great dry " river " of Wadi Birk ploughs its way through the massive barrier of Tuwaiq from west to east. Rising far off in the highlands of Najd proper, where I had crossed it near its source on my journey to Jidda some months before, the *Wadi*, known in its upper reaches as Wadi Sirra, runs a long course through the unknown mountainous and sandy region westward of Tuwaiq and, changing its name to Birk as it approaches the barrier, cleaves it in twain—like Wadi Dawasir in the south and Nisah, Ha and Ats farther north —and reappears at this point to join its floods with those of the 'Ajaimi and its manifold tributaries. There was nothing particularly imposing about the cliffs at this end of the gorge, but my companions told me that farther up and particularly at the entrance of the stream into the barrier the cliffs tower above its bed majestically to a great height. In all its length, however, there are no settlements, though the valley is a favourite resort of pasturing *Badawin* and is regarded locally as the southern boundary of the district of Al Fara', as it is undoubtedly the northern limit of the peregrinations of the tribes whose " *Dira* " is the Aflaj province.

A narrow ridge separates the mouth of Wadi Birk from the valley of the Fari'a, which at first sight looks as if it must be a tributary of it, though in point of fact it is not. A scarcely perceptible divide lying across the head of the wedge serves at once to deflect the waters of Birk eastward down towards the plain and to catch and guide into the Fari'a the drainage off the surrounding plateau, which pours by a dozen gullies into the short but broad and richly wooded valley of Nasabiyya, at the head of which we camped. The Nasabiyya is for all practical purposes an integral part of

the Fari'a, which presents one of the most curious natural phenomena I came across during the time I spent in Arabia, for, lying as it does for the two or three miles of its upper course parallel to and not more than a mile distant from the eastward-flowing Birk, it flows in exactly the opposite direction, attacking as it were the rocky heart of Tuwaiq in preference to following the line of least resistance into the Birk valley, and then turning northwards joins the Majma' in the Hauta oasis, whence the combined channel makes eastward for the plain and trends across it to join the 'Ajaimi valley in the Kharj district. From the point, therefore, where we camped for the night at its head to that at which we re-entered it on the following day after a march of about fifteen miles in a northerly direction, the Fari'a describes a semi-circle through the plateau, carving out for itself a deep gorge through the solid rock, and in due course finds its way back to the plain on the very edge of which it begins its perverse course.

Among the bushes in the valley some of our men had an unsuccessful hunt after the first *Hubara* I had seen since leaving the Summan downs in the spring, and no sooner had it been given up than a herd of gazelles was seen grazing some way ahead. The whole caravan was held up while our stalkers got to work, but once more they drew blank and the timid quarry darted away over the desolate waste. Earlier in the morning in the Ahmara gorge I had seen a grey partridge,[1] but hunting on the march is hunting under difficulties, and it was seldom that game appeared on our bill of fare, welcome as it would have been, particularly during these days, for our stock of tea and rice, articles not to be procured in the market-places of the south country, had now been exhausted, while the dates purchased at Ghail were found to be tenanted by weevils and necessitated not a little circumspection before being consigned to the mouth. For the rest we had meat enough and flour whereof to make coarse bread, to say nothing of the wheatmeal much used in the south for the making of *Jirish*.

[1] Possibly *Ortygornis pondicerianus*, though it might have been a *Sisi*; the former is the ordinary grey partridge familiar to dwellers in India.

A well-marked track ascends to the plateau from the head of the Nasabiyya valley, being there crossed at right angles by the well-worn paths of the grass-cutters of the Fara' settlements passing and re-passing on their frequent excursions to the Biyadh pastures from the Hilwa oasis, whose southerly extremity or rather a cairn on the cliff above it marking the position of the hamlet of Quai' was visible somewhat northward of due west from this point. The whole of the Fari'a and Majma' valleys and that of the Fara', as the two are designated after their junction at Hauta, up to Sha'ib Tarsh are rigorously preserved against all grazing but that of their own cattle by the people of the district, who are reputed to carry their churlishness to the point of refusing even water to the *Badawin* and their live-stock, as had occurred but a day or two before, when the Qubabina party we had met at the Ba'aija well were roughly turned away without being allowed to water their thirsty camels and sheep at the wells of the oasis. Commonly referred to by their neighbours as *Thiran* or oxen on account of their dulness of spirit and dourness of temper, they are credited with an ever-present dread of foreigners becoming cognisant of the secrets of the natural trenches, in which they eke out their lives in the bowels of Tuwaiq, self-supporting by reason of the extraordinary fertility of their cliff-girt oases and secure from all aggression from outside thanks to the vast spaces of inhospitable waterless desert around them, in which no enemy could support himself sufficiently long to besiege their strongholds. The people of Hauta had a year or two previously incurred a blood-feud with Mitrak in particular and his tribe in general—whose wandering homes are for the greater part of the year in the recesses of mountainous 'Alaiya, by a disregard of the laws of hospitality which had shocked the whole country, for Mitrak's own brother had alighted in the public square of the chief town of the district, Hilla in the oasis of Hauta, coming as the guest of one of its leading inhabitants, but had been set upon by men of the town and murdered in cold blood. The heads of the Shamir had held counsel together and approached Ibn Sa'ud for redress, with a request for his permission to settle accounts with the Hauta people

in their own way, but Ibn Sa'ud had been loth to sanction hostilities which might have far-reaching consequences, and had asked them to defer action pending the result of negotiations, which he himself had set in train with a view to a final settlement of the feud. That was the position at the time of our passage through the district; there was much bitterness in the heart of Mitrak, but I have never heard the outcome of the affair.

Ibrahim had obviously not quite made up his mind how to deal with the awkward situation created by my inconvenient reminder of his promise when we set out next morning on the beaten track over the plateau. Far and wide the scene spread out around us, the eastern edge of the Tuwaiq slope being some three miles distant on our right bordering the 'Ajaimi valley, while to the west the plateau extended as far as we could see rising steadily towards the hazy outline of 'Alaiya in the far distance, but showing here and there a glimpse of the cliffs bordering the deep cleft of the Majma' gorge. Closer at hand, perhaps three or four miles, in the same direction the valley of Fari'a appeared trending parallel to our course. The view towards our right front in the direction of Kharj was barred by the Sha'ara ridge, a detached outlier of Tuwaiq and parted from it by a tract of sand-dunes called Karradhiyya.

As we progressed, destroying in passing five diminutive scorpions found wriggling under the shadow of a low bush, the palms of Hilwa burst upon our view from the depths of the Fari'a gorge almost due west of us. From its southern extremity at the hamlet of Quai' the Hilwa oasis extends in an almost unbroken line of prosperous groves for four or five miles to within a short distance of the first palms and chief town of Hauta. In this space there are three considerable hamlets—Quai', Hilwa and 'Atiyan—and numerous detached *Qasrs* harbouring a population of close on 5000 souls, mainly of the Marshad section of Bani Tamim, a section which reappears in force in the oasis of Hauta side by side with their more numerous cousins of the Husain section. Bani Khadhir elements of more plebeian pedigree also figure largely in the populations of both oases as also in that of Hariq, where the dominant elements are the

Hazazina[1] section of 'Anaza and the Khathalin section of the Subai'.

At this point we were still at a considerable distance from the Hilwa oasis and I was lagging behind taking in the scene, when I noticed Ibrahim and Ibn Jilham, who were riding ahead, turn off abruptly at right angles to our course in a westerly direction on reaching two small but prominent conical hillocks called Bani Duraim towards a cairn on the top of the Fari'a cliff. I hastened forward in the hope that this new manœuvre betokened a change of plans, but found that its object was no more than to allow me a glimpse of the Hilwa oasis. From the cairn the valley was still a mile distant affording only a broken view of some parts of the oasis, but looking forward I could discern the course of the Majma' gorge and obtained a momentary glimpse of the town of Hilla in its setting of palms near the junction of the two valleys.

My appetite was now irresistibly whetted for more, and with some nervousness Ibrahim yielded to my pressure to the extent of permitting the continuance of our march along the cliff to the head of a deep gully known as Sha'ib Mirhij, where a halt was called for breakfast, and the camels were led down the declivity to water at a *Qasr* at the bottom of the gully. I took advantage of the delay to visit a commanding eminence overlooking the valley, whence I enjoyed a view at any rate of some part of the Hauta oasis and of a section of the great town of Hilla. This was all that was vouchsafed to me—a view of a land flowing with milk and honey, into which I might not enter.

About a mile below its head the Mirhij joins the Fari'a in a wide opening, in which appeared the extremities of the Hauta oasis separated by scarcely a mile from the north end of the palm-groves of Hilwa. Between that point and the confluence of the Fari'a with the Majma', marked by a dense forest of palms, the view was blotted out by a lofty cliff, from the edge of which projected part of the unwalled town of Hilla, unwalled because nature has provided it with all the fortifications it requires in the shape of towering cliffs on either side of the valley. About it in the opening

[1] Sing. *Hazzani.*

lay scattered *Qasrs* and a hamlet or two apparently in ruinous condition. One hamlet at the extremity of the oasis appeared to be wholly in ruins and abandoned; close by it under the great cliff forming the left bank of the Fari'a lay the *Qasr* of Ibn Khuraiyif, *Amir* of the Husain section; in the Mirhij itself lay the palms of Abu Tuyus about a small hamlet of that name and nearer to our halting-place the *Qasr* of Sha'ba in a small grove where our camels were watering.

The town of Hilla, so far as I could judge by its visible section and the information gleaned at the time from my companions, would seem to cover an area about three-quarters of a mile in length and about 300 yards across at its broadest point, being roughly oval in shape and composed of clay-built houses of unpretentious appearance. Its population may amount to some 10,000 souls, but may be included in that of the whole oasis, which may roughly be estimated at perhaps 20,000 persons all told. Below the town at the junction of Sha'ib Sulamiyya with the Fari'a stands a hamlet of the Husain section called 'Amairiyya, of which I obtained a glimpse when crossing the *Sha'ib* on resuming our march.

Of that part—the greater part—of the oasis, which lies in the Majma' gorge upstream of the junction of the Fari'a therewith, and of whose extremity alone I had a view, I can only record on the authority of my companions that it extends westward for some seven or eight miles to a point where the cliffs on either side close in to form a narrow neck. Between these points a dense band of palms clothes the valley from side to side with extensions into a number of bays formed by tributary gullies, the upstream end of the oasis being occupied by the large hamlet of Buraik inhabited mainly by folk of the Marshad section.

Thereafter for several miles upstream the gorge is devoid of cultivation or settlements as far as the oasis of Hariq situated at the confluence of six *Sha'ibs* from the surrounding uplands, which form the nucleus of the Majma', and comprising a considerable area of palms, a central town and two lesser villages, with innumerable *Qasrs* containing in all a population of some 7000 souls. Downstream of the junction of the Fari'a and Majma' the valley assumes the name of Al

Fara' or simply Al Batin, and contains but a few scattered groves, beyond which it is largely choked by sand-dunes which splay out before long into the 'Ajaimi plain beyond the outermost edge of the Tuwaiq slope.

According to Ibn Jilham, Hariq is the oldest of the Fara' settlements, dating back as a prosperous centre of cultivation to the time when the Majma' valley was as bare as the Dhaba'iyya ravine at the present day. In those days we may picture Hariq as inhabited by remnants of Bani Tamim, who, being driven forth from their homeland by the incursion of 'Anaza invaders, wandered down the valley, and, finding water plentiful enough, though at a great depth,—the wells of Hauta are as much as seventeen fathoms in depth—founded a new settlement which they named in memory of their earlier habitation Hautat al Hariq. This was destined in the course of time to usurp the place of the older town as the capital of the tract. Hariq, whose name is supposed to commemorate a devastating conflagration of ancient times, has declined in prosperity, especially during the recent past, but Hauta is yet in the full vigour of its youth though dating back to days long past and forgotten.

Resuming our march across the plateau we descended into the Sulamiyya *Sha'ib* by a double cairn known as Abu Ithnain and passed across it to ascend on to the plateau again by a steep rough path. The edge of the Tuwaiq slope was now close at hand with the Ajniba *Nafud* continuing the line of the Karradhiyya dunes on the hither side of the Sha'ara ridge, and a short march down the winding rocky gully of Umm al Hiran, between cliffs forty feet high, brought us into the sand-choked valley of Umm al Adyan, and so into the Fara' at the point of its exit from the plateau on to the plain. High ridges of sand covered profusely with vegetation of many kinds—acacias and *Markh*, *Ithil* and *Sarha*, *Shaia*, *Adhir* and such like—were tossed in wild confusion about the wide mouth of the valley where we camped for a midday siesta under the shelter of a long low ridge which marked for us the northern boundary of the Fara' district.

5. The Skirt of Jabal ʿAlaiya

From the head of the Saqta gorge in the previous December, as we paused for a moment to view the splendid scene before descending to the Dhruma valley, they had pointed out to me far to the southward a conspicuous flat-topped peak rising boldly out of a mountain mass, which they named ʿAlaiya. Circumstances did not permit of a near approach to those great crags, whose summits appeared to tower some 500 feet or more above the rim of the Tuwaiq cliff, itself a sheer precipice of perhaps 600 or 800 feet facing the western plain. It seemed to me that the tops of Jabal ʿAlaiya rose to an elevation of not less than 3500 feet above the sea-level, the Tuwaiq plateau sloping down abruptly from its eastern flank to the edge of the ʿAjaimi and Kharj plains, along which, emerging from the Faraʿ valley system, we were now to skirt its outer fringe as far as Riyadh itself, straightening our course at intervals by cutting across the low ridges, which project from it like buttresses to the edge of the Kharj valley and Wadi Hanifa.

The whole of the plateau, including the uplands of ʿAlaiya, from the Faraʿ valley on the south, to the great level-crossing channel of Shaʿib Ats on the north, is known as ʿAridh, the barrier, that is to say, between the western deserts and those centres of civilisation connected with the name of Bani Hanifa—Yamama and Manfuha, Riyadh and Daraʿiyya and ʿAyaina. The ʿAridh province as it is at the present day comprises, besides the trans-Tuwaiq districts of Western Mahmal and Dhruma, three intramontane tracts—namely Upland Mahmal, which falls outside the scope of this work and is bounded on the south by Wadi Hanifa; the Wadi Hanifa district ending southward at Haïr and the line of Shaʿib Ha, and lastly, Jabal ʿAlaiya itself. Of this last, a tract practically devoid of settlements at the present day, though not without striking indications of the past habitations of man, I have seen but the outer flanks and am little competent to attempt even a general sketch. It appears, however, on the evidence of Mitrak, who wandered about these parts with his fellow-tribesmen for many years, from youth upward, before entering the service

of Ibn Sa'ud, that it comprises a wild highland district, scored at frequent intervals by the deep troughs of its mountain gorges radiating from the high country along its western fringe. In these gorges the herdsmen of the Shamir wander with their flocks secure in their mountain recesses, whence in the old days of disorder they preyed unceasingly on the caravans passing between Kharj and the south country. Of his own share in some of these exploits Mitrak told me tales as we rode past the scenes where they had taken place, for we were passing, as any caravan might have done, over the level strip of plain on which opened the mouths of the gorges, and it was in these that the highway robbers used to lie in wait for their unsuspecting quarry.

" 'Twas even thus," he said, " one day, and it was raining, I was riding along alone seeking a livelihood, and lo! before me, I beheld one riding with his mantle over his head against the rain. He neither saw nor heard me as I rode up from behind, and then leaning from my saddle seized his arms on either side. In fear of his life he meekly submitted while I took all that he had and glad enough he was when I permitted him to depart. Such was the way in which we earned our living in those days. *Wallah!* I was brought up as a *Hanshali*—a brigand, but now, praise be to God, and after Him to Ibn Sa'ud, there is peace in the land, and robbers are roughly dealt with, but we have other ways of making a living and such as I are welcomed to the service of Ibn Sa'ud; it is the like of me he uses to carry important letters over the desert, for the *Hadhar* folk cannot travel long and alone without food and water as we *Badu* can."

He told me also that the 'Alaiya uplands are infested by leopards which do much damage among the grazing flocks. Once he had sat with a companion in a crevice of rock over a kill, awaiting the return of the killer, and they had had a few moments of wild excitement, when the leopard, badly wounded, sprang upon them, mauling Mitrak's arm severely before they succeeded in despatching him with their knives. In the crags of this mountain tract are also the haunts of the ibex.[1]

The climatic conditions had changed considerably for

[1] *Wa'l*, pl. *Wu'ul.*

the worse since we had left the cool uplands of Aflaj behind, and on this particular day the thermometer in the shade of a wide-spreading *Sarha* tree in the midst of that glaring expanse of sandy valley recorded 107° Fahr. at four o'clock when we resumed our march. Before that it had nearly touched 109° and the greater heat was intensified by a persistent southerly breeze which followed us for the next few days, bringing with it daily temperatures as high as 111° or 112°. The increase of heat may have been partly due to the unwelcome change in the direction of the wind, and to our descent to a lower land-level, but Ibn Jilham assured me that the country north of the Aflaj was notoriously hotter than the southern provinces at all times during the summer.

The bed of the Fara', which we now followed along the edge of the plain between the Tuwaiq slope on the one hand, and the line of the Ajniba *Nafud* on the other, had completely lost its valley formation, being henceforth to the point of its bifurcation the shallowest of sandy depressions. From this point one branch runs out across the plain, following a bend of the *Nafud* to join the 'Ajaimi, while the other, adopting the name of Saut, clings to the edge of the Tuwaiq slope for some distance farther before striking off to join the 'Ajaimi channel in the oasis of Dilam.

The first tributary from the Tuwaiq slope, Umm Sulaim, joins the Saut just below the fork, and soon afterwards we came to a considerable group of masonry ruins, obviously a settlement of former times, but one of whose history there appears to be no hint in local tradition. Known as Abu Sahra, which is also the name of one of the small ravines [1] of Tuwaiq joining the Saut lower down, it doubtless dates from the period, which saw the creation of the Mawan settlement, to which we were to come on the following day, but the silence of legend leaves us to conjecture that the architects of these stone dwellings lived at any rate before the incursion of the present lords of the locality though not necessarily in the remote past.

We camped that night at the mouth of Sha'ib 'Ashairan and moved next day down the valley of the Saut, between

[1] This is joined before reaching the Saut by the petty ravine of Hamlan.

which and the rapidly diverging Fara' lay a tract of bare stony downs, a continuation as it were of the Tuwaiq slope. One after another we passed the mouths of the many ravines, which run down into the plain—'Ashariyya, Quraina, Abu Farida, Qahlul with the mouth of the Qarrada issuing from the opposite down tract, Abu Fuhaid, Umm Nakhla and Tarsh—until we came to the pebbly torrent strand of Wuthailan, which, becoming the main channel of the Saut, runs down under either name indifferently towards Dilam behind the Khashm Kalb ridge, another prominent landmark of the outward journey.

In the neighbourhood of the mouth of Sha'ib Tarsh the whole valley was covered with a dense coppice of acacias, *Sarha, Sidr* and other trees, and a profusion of grasses, this tract forming the northward limit of the grazing preserve of the Fara' people. This practice of reserving areas for grazing is comparatively rare in the northern provinces of Najd, where Ibn Sa'ud himself alone claims exclusive grazing rights, as for instance in the Khafs area, but in the south it is fairly frequent—such areas constituting as it were common lands held in joint proprietary right by communities though not by individuals.

The Wuthailan channel is joined by a number of tributary ravines [1] in its course downstream of its junction with the Saut, the whole tract forming excellent pasture land, frequented by the flocks and herds of Kharj. Throughout the march I had noticed sand-grouse and pigeon wheeling about above us in enormous flights, while Mitrak expended himself to no purpose in an expedition after four gazelles, which appeared in the distance ahead of us where the valley broadens out as it flows through a narrow strip of *Nafud* [2] into the Kharj plain.

We now struck over a low projection [3] of the Tuwaiq plateau steering a more northerly course with the Khashm Kalb and the Kharj district well away to our right. The view was uninspiring to a degree, and I harboured no thought

[1] Abu Halfa, Khamsa and Umm Salam.

[2] Called Qasaïm.

[3] This was traversed by two little gullies, Dahlat al Qu'ud and Mandasa, flowing into the Wuthailan farther down.

but to hurry on as rapidly as possible, but I was reckoning without my companions. I had yielded to urgent appeals for a halt amid the rich grazing of the Tarsh coppice though it was then only seven o'clock and too early for breakfast, but scarcely two hours later the pangs of hunger began to make themselves felt and there was murmuring in the caravan. Riding ahead I had just passed beyond a grassy spot in Sha'ib Tumair, which runs down across the gentle slope of the plateau to join the Wuthailan out in the plain, when Mitrak, deputed by the rest, overtook me. "Look," he said, "that grass there is the last we shall see before we reach Sha'ib Mawan; let us halt and graze the camels while we break our fast." "And how far off is Mawan?" I asked. "*Wallah!*" he replied, "it will be noon before we reach the *Sha'ib*; I know this country well, for often have I travelled over it and there is no grass between here and there." "*Inshallah*," I persisted, "we shall come to grazing after a little more marching; at any rate it is too early for our midday halt and we have already wasted time over the grazing in Sha'ib Tarsh. We must march yet a little while, and, *Inshallah*, we shall find other grass within half an hour." It was a bold prophecy to make, for the plain before us held out little promise of its fulfilment, but I had my way and the march was continued in sullen silence. I led the way searching for the wherewithal to confound my guides and companions.

The smooth surface of the slope became rougher as we marched, and about twenty minutes after I had spoken we found ourselves on the edge of a broad sandy torrent-bed clothed from side to side with desert verdure and issuing from a cliff-bound channel in the folds of the higher ground to our left. "What is this?" I asked, turning to Mitrak. "*Wallah! 'Ishb*," [1] he replied. "Did I not tell you," I said, "that God would provide grazing for us at the proper time? See, Mitrak, you are my guide, you are a man of this country, and you have lied to me. Do you know what I will do now? *Wallah*, we shall not halt here nor until we reach the Mawan itself. Let us go on and lie to me no more. What is the name of this *Sha'ib* that I may write

[1] Grass.

of the grass it contains ?" "*Wallah, ya Sahib !*" he replied, covered with confusion, "it is many years since I left these parts and I have never visited this place before, but this is surely the Mawan *Sha'ib* and no other. I have visited the *Qasrs* and water-pools farther up, but have never been down as far as this." "And yet you, who know this country so well, every stone of it and every shrub of it, told me it was many hours distant from the Tumair ! Mitrak, you have lied to me knowing that you were lying, and you did so, I know it, at the bidding of Ibrahim. You shall see how I shall treat you all for this. The curse of God be upon the lot of you for liars and false guides."

With that we halted, spending several hours in that grassy spot, before resuming our march up the *Sha'ib* to the ruined settlement of Mawan, about three miles up, where we ended the day's march. "Look here," I said to Ibrahim, "from beginning to end of this journey it has been thus, and you have made things difficult for me ; I have forgiven you time and again, but you have been ever the same, seeking ever to thwart me. You know that Ibn Sa'ud is anxiously awaiting our return, for we have delayed over long already ; and yet every day you seek to increase our delay by halting here and halting there. I am weary of this, and now let the delay be on your own heads. If the camels are tired, let them rest, and that they may do so the better we halt here the whole of to-morrow. Perhaps the next day you will march the better." This decision was received with dismay and many attempts were made during the evening to dissuade me from my purpose, but I insisted, and we spent a pleasant, though hot, day by the pools of Mawan amid the ruins of an ancient settlement. The Arab, much as he hates the sustained exertion of a long march—two hours at a time is enough for him with a short halt for coffee between the periods—finds a prolonged halt in the desert equally distasteful. On the march his one idea is to get back to his home, but he likes getting there in his own way, and his way is to travel night and day by short stages punctuated by periods of rest. I was sorry that Mitrak, hitherto my staunchest friend among the party, had allowed himself to be used as an instrument for the

furtherance of Ibrahim's designs, but I announced to both impartially that neither should share in the distribution of bounty which would signalise our arrival at Riyadh. I kept my word, but was not sorry some months later to make good to Mitrak that which he had forfeited on this occasion, and to secure his services in attendance on me for nearly the whole of the remaining period of my sojourn in the country.

I had intended spending the day of enforced idleness in an excursion up the valley and the camels had been collected in readiness for this purpose when I awoke, but a long series of nights cut short by early starts had made me weary and I decided to have a day's rest with the result that my only outing was a walk up the valley for about a mile, and a return to camp along the summit of the cliff of its left bank.

The spot in which we were encamped was a wide circular bulge in the valley narrowing to a width of perhaps 100 yards at either end. It may have been nearly a quarter-mile across at the widest part and was surrounded by little rock-lined bays, the surface being mainly of sand with accumulations of silt here and there, on which, year after year, people from Hilwa, in whom for some obscure reason the right of cultivation in the valley vests, lay out their cornfields. These they irrigate with flood-water and from a series of perennial brooks, which, welling up from springs below the surface of the sandy valley bottom, form the most attractive feature of the locality—an almost continuous line of narrow streams, the last of which ends in a pool of moderate dimensions close by the site of our camp. According to information gleaned from a party of shepherds who visited the spot during our stay the brooks tend to run dry towards the end of the summer season, but in years of good rainfall they maintain themselves from season to season, affording a constant supply to shepherds and peasants.

Why this spot has ceased to be a scene of settled life as in former times it would be difficult to say, but the fact remains that its many ruins have been ruins so long that no tradition remains either of the people who lived here, or of the reasons which led to their departure or extinction.

The upper part of the valley is clothed with a rich coppice of dwarf poplars, willows and tall *Halfa* reeds, while the area cultivated with corn by seasonal immigrants is very considerable, each group of fields having at its side a threshing floor piled thick with the chaff of the last harvest. Here and there also are wells sunk to a depth of four fathoms, and in one spot in a recess of one of the ruins we found some well-gear left there till its owners should come again —a striking, though perhaps not altogether just, tribute to *Badawin* honesty.

In the midst of the poplars upstream stood a few *Qasrs* one of which was externally practically intact, though its interior from long disuse was piled high with refuse and exhibited the ravages of time. It was mostly of clay with a strengthening of masonry, its most striking feature being a turreted structure projecting somewhat forward over the main doorway with *Masalit*[1] or loopholes effectively commanding the space below. On the summit of the cliff of the left bank, where it juts forward into the bulge of the valley, was another *Qasr* of large dimensions and mainly of stonework, cunningly contrived to take advantage of the sheer walls of the rock and thus forming a natural fort except on the inland side, where powerful masonry walls commanded the approach from the plateau. In it, or rather to one side of it, lay a great cleft in the natural rock about twenty yards long and a few feet across with a concave bottom forming or apparently once used as a reservoir for the storage of rainwater for the use of the garrison.

But the chief section of the old settlement appeared to be a *Qasr* or perhaps a hamlet built in terraces up the slope of the right bank cliff and for some distance back from its summit on to the plateau, the whole being surrounded by a massive masonry wall, whose loopholes commanded the valley and plateau in every direction, from which an attack might have been made. At the corners of the wall stood formidable bastions and within its circuit were one or two wells—eloquent testimony of the troublous times of the past, when the denizens of the settlement had to be entirely self-supporting against siege by their enemies.

[1] Sing. *Maslut*.

The Arabs, who visited us during the day, brought news of young Turki's departure for the Qasim with contingents from Kharj and Dhruma, some 500 men destined to form the nucleus of the force with which he was to open the offensive against the Shammar. They also told us of the occurrence of fighting at Khurma, where a *Sharifian* force, reputed, but wrongly, to have been led by one of the King's son's, had been worsted by the Subai' tribesmen reinforced by 'Ataiba elements who had answered the call for assistance addressed to the *Ikhwan* communities of Rain and Ghatghat. Otherwise little of interest had taken place during our long absence except that Ibn Sa'ud's tax-gatherers had gone forth to collect the annual *Zakat*, Ibn Suwailim to the Qahtan country and Ibn Zaid to Kharj, while Ibn Jilham was being anxiously expected back to set out again for the Wadi for the same purpose.

Early on the morning after our day's halt at the Mawan ruins we retraced our steps down the *Sha'ib*, whose farther course sweeps round the shoulder of the Khashm Kalb ridge and joins the Wuthailan in the plain before Dilam. We struck away, however, to the northward where the channel debouches from the gorge, and followed the fringe of the higher ground where the going was comparatively easy. Crossing the Ghubaiyid, an unimportant tributary of the Mawan, we rose again on to the higher ground, a rolling tract of downs from which we enjoyed a wide view over the Kharj plain to the distant Firzan ridge.

We now came to, and crossed, the broad rocky bed of Sha'ib Suwais running down between forty-foot cliffs to join the 'Ain channel, and paused for breakfast in the broken uplands beyond in a shallow depression called Irza, dotted with cairns marking the last resting-places of the many victims of an old-time contest between the Shamir lords of the 'Alaiya pastures and invaders of the Bani Hajir, now thrust back to the deserts of the Hasa. The Shamir are now undisputed masters of all this tract, their cousins, the Matara and the 'Arqa, occupying respectively the foot-hills of upland Aflaj and the downs south of Sulaiyil even to far Najran. Such is the modern tribal distribution resulting from the spread of the 'Ajman in former times eastward towards the

Hasa, for these four sections claim close kinship with each other and admit the title of the last named to priority.

While we were breakfasting a party of Shamir nomads passed us with their flocks, giving us the news that Ibn Sa'ud, having received Ibrahim's report of our reception at the Wadi, had already taken action to vindicate his authority. It so happened that Ibn Dara'an, whose son had been one of the leaders of the movement against us, had at about this time visited Riyadh and left it on his return home; messengers had accordingly been sent post-haste after him, and doubtless the unfortunate father was already in durance at the capital being visited with the sins of his son.

Sha'ib 'Ain, which we reached soon after resuming our march, flows down into the plain between Na'jan and Dhaba'a and is a splendid specimen of a Tuwaiq gorge, its broad pebbly bed winding through a valley bordered by cliffs a hundred feet high and generally precipitous. We descended into it by way of a gully with gently sloping sides and followed it up for several miles to a small *Sha'ib*—Ghuwainam by name—by which we climbed again on to the plateau. At frequent intervals during our course up the valley we passed small groups of black tents of Shamir *Badawin* fasting painfully under the shade of bushes —acacias and poplars for the most part—in the neighbourhood of shallow pools still surviving from the last floods. Water is, as a matter of fact, obtainable throughout this valley with little trouble, for the sandy bed has but to be scraped up a foot or two to yield its subterranean store, and every tent group had its shallow water-holes within easy reach. Some parts of the gorge had a thick covering of grasses and *Tarfa*, from the midst of which we startled a gazelle only to see it dart up the steep bank of the valley and vanish over the sky-line. The largest group of tents contained some twenty black habitations, whose male inmates had gathered under a coppice of poplars by a slender pool to while away the day in sleep and conversation.

The cliffs on either side of the Ghuwainam were pitted with cave-like recesses, of which we took advantage for our siesta after watering the camels at a group of recently-scooped-out water-holes at the mouth of the *Sha'ib*. The

level of the plateau, which we reached after twisting and turning for some five minutes with the rocky bed of the ravine in its upper extremities, was about 200 feet above that of the 'Ain, where we had left it. A gently undulating down now lay before us for the rest of the afternoon until we came to and pitched our tents in one of a trio of shallow depressions,[1] whose junction farther down the slope forms Sha'ib Baljan the most northerly tributary of the 'Ain. To the left the plateau rolled away before us, fold after fold, to the high ridge of 'Alaiya, whose continuity is broken by a remarkable gap beset by a semicircle of weathered peaks marking in all probability—though on this point I could not obtain any precise information—the point at which Sha'ib Nisah, another of the great level-crossing gorges so characteristic of the Tuwaiq, enters the cleft which constitutes its channel through the barrier. The surface of the plateau between us and 'Alaiya was marked with crevices forming the heads of the many petty ravines, which converge on the upper reaches of the 'Ain, while to our right the slope descends gently to the confines of Kharj five or six miles away, where the prominent features of Abu Walad and Khashm Kalb on the one side, and the Firzan ridge and hillocks on the other, formed familiar links with the country we had traversed in the early stages of our excursion. In the far distance beyond the Firzan ridge appeared the long cliff and echeloned headlands of the Jubail terminating to the northward in the great crags of Khashm Hith.

A short rise out of the Baljan depressions and a long descent down the easy slope of the plateau brought us next morning to the edge of Sha'ib Nisah, which we entered by way of the rocky and tortuous ravine of Sudair, the cone of Umm Rughaiba appearing at the farther side of the Nisah in the western extremity of the Firzan ridge which forms its left bank.

Nearly two miles wide between the low rocky ridges which line its course, the broad sandy bed of the Nisah, through which runs a slender thread of firmer clay soil representing the storm channel, lies due west and east

[1] Collectively known as Al Balajin.

between the gap in 'Alaiya, which I have already mentioned, and the broad delta by which it splays out into the Kharj plain. Shelf by shelf we ascended the well-marked track which traverses the rough country on the farther side, and came in view from its summit of the 'Abda' hillock and the Zuwailiyat ridge on the farther side of Wadi Hanifa. Our path was crossed by a track leading to some wells in Sha'ib Ba'aija, whose deep gorge appeared on our left hand winding through the plateau towards Wadi Hanifa. Into it or rather into a wide circular depression whose highest point forms the divide between it and Sha'ib Dahu, another tributary of the *Wadi*, we descended round the shoulder of 'Abda, our camels sliding rather than marching down a steep glacis of sand which lay piled up against its northern face. Amid the thorn-bushes which dotted the depression we halted through the noontide hours by the side of the Ba'aija channel, whose cliff-bound gorge, covered with *Harmal*, *Rimdh* and other vegetation, and about 200 yards wide, we followed along a narrow pebble-strand to a bend beyond which the first palms of Haīr came into view. In a few moments we were in the channel of Wadi Hanifa and back among the familiar scenes of the oasis, in which there had been little change since we had left it behind in the first days of the summer. The volume of the central pond had indeed shrunk to an appreciable extent and the small berries of the palm-groves looked more like dates than they had then, while the poplar-coppice seemed denser than ever, and here and there lay the black booths of Subai' *Badawin* gathered for their annual fast and the date harvest. For the rest, the village itself and its palm-groves, and the towers upon the cliff were as before, and as they have been, and will be through the ages.

It was the last night of our journey. Messengers were sent ahead to warn Ibn Sa'ud of our coming and Ibrahim came into my tent after dinner to make his peace with me; but the future lay before me and I was determined that thereafter Ibrahim, at least, should have nothing further to do with my outgoing and incoming. To achieve this it was imperative that I should maintain the attitude of reserve which I had adopted since the Mawan incident towards

the leaders of the party, and a good excuse for so doing had presented itself during the day's march. While we were riding along I turned to Ibn Jilham in the hearing of Ibrahim, Mitrak, Tami and others with a question asked with the deliberate intention of seeing whether the plain speaking at Mawan had had any effect. "How does our track run," I asked, "between Haïr and Riyadh?" "*Wallah! ma' 'l Wadi*" ("By way of Wadi Hanifa, of course"), came the unhesitating reply. Their one desire was to get home and get there quickly regardless of my known desire to see country I had not seen before. "But," I urged, "I should prefer to go by some other road for I have already seen the *Wadi* and all that is in it." "Nay, but the only way to Riyadh from Haïr is that of the *Wadi*, unless we go up the Ha all the way to Dhruma and return thence by the Abaljidd track." I held my own counsel for the time being in face of the transparent conspiracy to head me off the fulfilment of my design, but when Ibrahim came to me in the evening with smirking, but somewhat bashful, congratulations on the safe conclusion of our great adventure, I took the bull by the horns. "Look here, Ibrahim," I said, "I know that there is a track leading from here to Riyadh over the plateau other than the *Wadi* route and by that track I, at any rate, intend to return—with you or without you I care not; be good enough therefore to arrange accordingly." "*Wallah!*" he began, pleadingly, "you heard say to-day that there is no route but that of the *Wadi*, and none of us have knowledge of any other, but there are some folk of the village drinking coffee at the fire, I will go and enquire of them." In a few moments he was back with the information that there was a track, but a very difficult one, up one of the Ha gullies to the top of the plateau. "So be it," I replied, "I shall go by that track"; and so it was arranged that we should do so in company. Next morning at dawn, as we marched through the oasis and up the great Ha gorge with its towering cliffs and patches of palms, I made merry at their expense, twitting them with their failure to deceive me by their lies. Tami then declared on his honour that none of them had any knowledge of this other path of which the people of Haïr spoke. "How then," I asked, "did I

know of it, who am but a stranger in these parts? No, but throughout these days you have worked with one accord to put me off with lies and deceit. Have you forgotten the grazing at Mawan and the other occasions when you lied to me? And have you not observed that every day I write down that which I see and hear? Listen, that I may tell you. It was even one of you that told me of this other track when we first came to Haïr two months back, and it is written in my book. Therefore did I know of it." Horror-stricken at this revelation they looked at their betrayer, but Mitrak, who had apparently forgotten how much he had told me and that he had told me of his own passage many times before by that route, declared that he had never known of that track and that, perhaps the one he had told me about was the Dhruma route.

"Well then," I asked, "where is our guide? Have you not asked one of the village folk to show us the way up the gully?" They replied that no one had been willing to accompany us, but that Mitrak had been duly posted up in the intricacies of the way. Then followed a few moments of ill-sustained pantomime for my benefit, scouts were sent to spy out the openings of the gullies for signs of tracks up them, and Mitrak led off at a rapid pace and with the unerring instinct of the expert guide in familiar country to the right spot, where a track, proclaiming its frequent use by a litter of camel-dung and the marks of pads on the firm soil, led up to a narrow boulder-strewn neck at the top of the gully and to the open plateau beyond, scored by the winding lines of a camel highway. They made a good deal of capital out of the momentary difficulty of the ascent, but had nothing more to say when we came to the beginning of the road leading in a bee-line towards Riyadh over the plateau inclined to our right flank and forwards to the broad depression of Wadi Hanifa.

At intervals the track dipped and rose into and out of shallow slab-paved *Sha'ibs*[1] trending towards the *Wadi* while to our left extended the bare wilderness of the plateau marked in one spot by three low mounds of rock called Kusai'an. Mitrak now tried to make amends for his former

[1] 'Awaija, Ummhat al Faraïd, Umm Ghar.

perversity by supplying me with the names of the features which came in our way, but I expressed my scepticism as to the value of his information in view of this being his first visit to the tract; somewhat ostentatiously I refused to record them in my notebook — an omission which I rectified at the first convenient opportunity when I could do so unobserved.

At length, as we progressed, a broad dark shadow rose out of a basin of tumbled rocks and ridges far ahead, and the pious ejaculations of my comrades informed me that the palms of the *Wahhabi* capital lay before my eyes. Little by little the blurred view became more precise, but we lost it again with our descent to the Hanifa valley at the point where we had first halted on the outward journey in the Baqra *Sha'ib*. And so we advanced up the *Wadi* through the remnants of Jiza to the first outpost of the Manfuha oasis, the *Qasr* of Miz'al, whence, leaving Masana' on our left, we followed the edge of the palm-groves to Manfuha itself.

A few moments before reaching the village we were met by a horseman, 'Abdul'aziz ibn Ruba'i, sent forth by Ibn Sa'ud to welcome us on our safe return. Ibn Sa'ud, he said, had retired after the morning audience to his apartments, and would sit again in public audience to receive us in the latter part of the afternoon; till then we were at liberty to rest where we were and etiquette of course demanded that we should do so, deferring our entry until a time convenient for our host. Ibn Ruba'i brought a post-bag for me with letters and papers with which I beguiled the hot hours of the day, enjoying at the same time a generous supply of the excellent water-melons [1] of the country, which they placed before me, and which I now tasted for the first time.

At length the time came for our formal entry into the city and a short march across the sun-scorched ridge between the two sections of the oasis and up the Shamsiyya torrent-bed, now thickly dotted with the black tents of *Badawin* visitors, brought us to the main gate on its north-east flank. We entered Riyadh, exactly fifty days after we had

[1] *Jah* or *Habhab*; the terms *Battikh* and *Raqqi* common in Mesopotamia are seldom used in Arabia.

ridden forth to the southward, on the 24th June, the fourteenth day of *Ramdhan*, the great month of fasting, which on this occasion, as once in a long generation, happened to fall astride the longest day of the year, bringing in its train for a people so stern and conscientious in the observance of God's commandments the maximum of physical discomfort and spiritual satisfaction. The deserted streets of the capital, whose pall of powdered dust shimmered beneath the blazing rays of the midsummer sun, were as the streets of a city of the dead as we passed silently to our couching before the noble pile of Ibn Sa'ud's great palace.

APPENDIX I

EXTRACTS FROM A REPORT BY PROFESSOR R. B. NEWTON, I.S.O., F.G.S., OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, ON A COLLECTION OF FOSSILS FROM CENTRAL ARABIA (JABAL TUWAIQ)

A COLLECTION of fossils, the determination of which forms the subject of this report, was obtained by Mr. H. St.J. B. Philby, C.I.E., from Central Arabia during his remarkable traverse of that country in 1918 between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea while engaged on a Government diplomatic mission.

These specimens, although of a fragmentary character, give interesting evidence of a marine Jurassic fauna which presents a relationship with material already described from the south-western region of Arabia.

. . . . . .

Mr. Philby's fossils were obtained from four localities:

(1) BACHAIN [BAKKAIN], in the neighbourhood of [illegible] (*Long.* 46°, *Lat.* 25°), which is some 3200 feet above sea-level, where the rocks are fawn-coloured limestones of considerable hardness, being more or less siliceous with occasional associations of "Beekite" and sometimes showing oolitic structure.

(2) EL HISH [AL HISH], probably also near Sadus, is stated to be 2800 feet above sea-level. An eroded and cream-coloured example of *Isastraea*, without matrix, has been found here, so that we would be justified in assuming that its associated limestone would be of similar colour.

(3) ASHAIRA ['ASHAIRA] (*Long.* 46°, *Lat.* 22° 50′).—The fossiliferous limestone of this region is cream-coloured. This locality and the following, Hamar, are about 150 miles south of Sadus.

(4) HAMAR (*Long.* 46° 10′, *Lat.* 22° 30′).—The limestone of this locality is of ferruginous colour and frequently contains minute grains of peroxide of iron; it is besides of great hardness,

being siliceo-calcareous, and has much the appearance of a coarse sandstone.

. . . . . .

[*Here follows a detailed description of the fossils noted below.*]

CEPHALOPODA . . .	LYTOCERAS (?).
GASTROPODA . . .	NERINEA, cf. DESVOIDYI, ORBIGNY.
PELECYPODA . . .	OSTREA, cf. MONTBELIARDENSIS, CONTEJEAN.
,, . . .	LOPHA (?) PHILBYI, n. sp.
,, . . .	LOPHA SOLITARIA, J. DE C. SOWERBY.
,, . . .	GRYPHAEA, cf. DILATATA, J. SOWERBY.
,, . . .	EXOGYRA BRUNTRUTANA (THURMANN—P. DE LORIOL).
,, . . .	CHLAMYS ARTICULATUS (SCHLOTHEIM).
,, . . .	HINNITES, cf. INAEQUISTRIATUS (VOLTZ), THURMANN.
BRACHIOPODA . . .	TEREBRATULA SUBSELLA, LEYMERIE.
,, . . .	RHYNCHONNELLA sp.
,, . . .	RHYNCHONNELLA, cf. SUBVARIABILIS, DAVIDSON.
POLYZOA	STOMATOPORA, cf. WALTONI, HAIME.
ECHINODERMATA . .	PYGURUS (?).
,, . . .	RHABDOCIDARIS sp.
ACTINOZOA . . .	MONTLIVALTIA sp.
,, . . .	ISASTRAEA sp.
SPONGIAE	LYMNORELLA sp.

SUMMARY

The fossils herewith described represent the remnants of a marine fauna which thrived over a considerable area of what is now Arabia during the Jurassic period. They were chiefly obtained from Bachain, only two determinable specimens having been found at Hamar and two at Ashaira, while one came from El Hish. . . .

Some of the specimens, although mostly imperfect, have exhibited structures that have allowed of a fairly close determination, and it is certain that they may be recognised as belonging to the Sequanian and Kimeridgian stages of Upper Jurassic times. *Exogyra Bruntrutana*, however, occurs also in the Portlandian although originating in the Oxfordian, whereas *Chlamys Articulatus* ranges from Bathonian to the Kimeridgian, and the *Polyzoan* is apparently only known in the Bathonian stage. The *Nerinea* has already been noticed as occurring in Upper Jurassic rocks north of Aden, the Bachain fragments of this genus being associated with equally well-known fossils that present the Sequanian-Kimeridgian facies.

It is interesting to note a faunistic resemblance with the Upper Jurassic fossils of Somaliland and Abyssinia, described respectively by Dacque and Futterer, which also extends to European and British faunas. For the present, therefore, this fauna may be regarded as of Sequanian (=Corallian)-Kimeridgian age, although it is hoped that future explorations will yield a greater variety of better-preserved and more abundant specimens and so enable us to gather more information on Arabian stratigraphy.

We must congratulate Mr. Philby on his explorations, his palaeontological specimens having materially increased our knowledge of the geological structure of this hitherto unknown region of Central Arabia.

APPENDIX II

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS USED IN THIS WORK

A. Trees, Plants, etc.

(Mostly identified by Bombay Natural History Society)

Adhīd . . . . . Lactuca remotiflora, D.C. (*Compos.*).
Ādhir . . . . . ?
Aibid . . . . . Tetrapogon villosus, Desf. (*Gram.*).
Ajla . . . . . *Graminea sp.*
Alījān . . . . . *Crucifera sp.*
Alqa . . . . . ?
Ambaut . . . . . A variety of dates.
Anqūt (Thidda) . . . *Graminea sp.*
Arfaj . . . . . A common desert bush.
Arra . . . . . Aerua tomentosa, Forsk. (*Amarantae*).
Arta . . . . . Ephedra *sp.* (*Gnetac.*).
Āsal . . . . . ?
Ashairqān . . . . Crotolaria *sp.* (*Legum.*).
Ataf . . . . . Ephedra *sp.* (*Gnetac.*).
Aushaz . . . . . ?

Bān . . . . . Moringa peregrina, Fiori (*Moringac.*).
—, Zubb al . . . . Fruit of above.
Bana . . . . . Euphorbia granulata, Forsk. (*Euphorb.*).
Baqara . . . . . Lannaea nudicaulis, Less. (*Compos.*).
Barriyya . . . . Berries of Yaman coffee-plant.
Barsīm (Jat) . . . Lucerne.
Barwaq . . . . . Asphodelus tenuifolius, Cav. (*Lil.*).
Batbāt . . . . . Atriplex *sp.* (*Chenopod.*).
„ . . . . . Zygophyllum coccineum, L. (*Zygophyll.*).
Battīkh . . . . Melon.
Bisbās . . . . . Pycnocula ancheriana, Dene (*Umbell.*).

Dhā'a . . . . . *Graminea sp.*
Dhabiyya . . . . Tephrosia Apollinea, Link. (*Legum.*).
Dhanab Nāb . . . A succulent plant of the *Nafud.*
Dhumrān . . . . Salsola Forskalii, Schweinf. (*Chenopod.*).
Duraima . . . . Fagonia *sp.* (*Zygophyll.*).

Faq'a . . . . . A species of Truffle.

Ghadhā . . . . *Chenopodiacea sp.* (? Haloxylon articulatum).
Ghāf . . . . . A species of Dwarf Poplar (also used of Willow).
Ghalqa . . . . . Aristolochia *sp.* (*Aristoloch.*).
Gharaira . . . . Malcohina nana, Boiss. (*Crucifer.*).
Gharaz . . . . . *Graminea sp.*
Ghulsaira . . . . Cornulaca monacantha, Del. (*Chenopod.*).

Habhab . . . . Melon.
Hadaj . . . . . Cucumis pustulatus, Hook. (*Cucurbit.*).
Hādh . . . . . Salsola *sp.* (*Chenopod.*).
Halfa . . . . . A species of reed.
Hama (Tha'lūq) . . *Crucifera sp.*
Hamāt . . . . . Arnebia hispidissima, D.C. (*Boragin.*).
„ . . . . . Wild fig.
Hambaiz . . . . Creeping succulent plant found in *Nafud.*
Hambāsīs . . . . Small plant found in *Nafud.*
Hamdh . . . . . *Chenopodiacea sp.* (?).
Hamrūr . . . . *Graminea sp.*
— al Jabal . . . . Andropogon caricosus, L. (*Gram.*).
Harās . . . . . Galium *sp.* (*Rubiac.*).
Harmal . . . . . ?
Hasak . . . . . Medicago laciniata, All. (*Legum.*).
Hathara . . . . Notoceras *sp.* (*Crucifer.*).
Haudhān . . . . Flowering plant resembling the dandelion.
Hilaiwa . . . . Fagonia cretica, L. (*Zygophyll.*).
Hīsh . . . . . Dwarf palm.

Idhrīs . . . . . A prickly desert plant.
'Ishb . . . . . General term for grasses, pasture, etc.
'Ishrīq . . . . . Cassia obovata, Collad. (*Legum.*).
Ithil . . . . . Tamarix macrocarpa, Bunge (*Tamaricac.*).
Itla . . . . . *Asclepiadacea sp.*

Jah . . . . . Water-melon.
Jahwīyān . . . . A desert daisy.
Jat (Barsīm) . . . Lucerne.
Jathjāth . . . . Vernonia cinerascens, Sch.-Bip. (*Compos.*).
Jinna . . . . . Grewia tenax, Fiori [=G. populifolia, Vahl] (*Tiliac.*).

Kahīl . . . . . Anchusa hispida, Forsk. (*Boragin.*).
Karab . . . . . Thick base of palm-fronds.
Karish . . . . . A flowering desert plant.
Karrāth (Qurais) . . *Composita sp.*
Khadhdhar . . . . A desert plant.
Khadhrī . . . . A variety of dates.
Kharīt . . . . . A flowering desert plant.
Kharshaf . . . . A species of Thistle (?).
Khassāb . . . . *Graminea sp.*
Khatmī . . . . Convolvulus *sp.* (*Convolvulac.*).
Khatra . . . . . Schweinfurthia pterosperma, Braun (*Scrophulac.*).

Khirriyya (Samna) . Saffron plant.
Khīs . . . . . Dwarf palm.
Khizāma . . . . Carrichtera vellae, D.C. (*Crucifer.*).
Khubbaiz . . . . Malva (?) *sp.* (*Malvac.*).
„ . . . . Mollugo glinus, A. Rich. (*Ficoideac.*).
Kidād . . . . . Acacia hamulosa, Benth. (*Legum.*).
Kirma . . . . . Fruit of Ithil (*q.v.*).

Lūbiyya . . . . A species of bean resembling the Scarlet Runner.

Makar . . . . . Polycarpaea repens, Archers-Schweinf. (*Caryophyllac.*).
Makwizī . . . . A variety of dates.
Marār . . . . . Dicoma *sp.* (*Compos.*).
Markh . . . . . A high-growing shrub resembling Broom.
Milīh . . . . . Halopeplis *sp.* (*Chenopod.*).
Misht al Dhīb . . Cucumis prophetarum, L. (*Cucurbit.*).
Miskanī . . . . A variety of dates.
Musai' . . . . . A grass of the *Nafud.*
Musaika . . . . Cleome *sp.* (*Capparid.*).

Nabt al Saif . . . A variety of dates.
Najī'a . . . . . Blepharis edulis, Pers. (*Acanthac.*).
Niqq (Niqt or Nuqt) . Chrozophora *sp.* (*Euphorb.*).
Nisha . . . . . Oropetium thomaeum, Trin. (*Gram.*).
Nussī . . . . . Aristida *sp.* (*Gram.*).

Qaisūm . . . . . A thyme-like plant.
Qarnūt al Sahal . . Erodium *sp.* (*Giran.*).
Qasba . . . . . A reed from the *Nafud.*
Qasīs . . . . . Helianthemum *sp.* (*Cistac.*).
Qataf . . . . . Astragalus *sp.* (*Legum.*).
Qattain . . . . Convolvulus sericophyllus, Anders. (*Convolvulac.*).
Qirdha (Qirdhī) . . A bush like Broom.
Qishr . . . . . The husks of coffee-berries.
Qulqulān al Sahal . . Hippocrepis bicontorta, Loisl. (*Legum.*).
Qurais (Karrāth) . . *Compositа sp.*
Qutun . . . . . Gossipeum arboreum, L., *var* Neglecta, Watt. (*Malvac.*).
Quwaifa . . . . Trianthema *sp.* (*Ficoideac.*).

Raghal (Rughal) . . Aristolochia bracteata, Retz (*Aristoloch.*).
Rāk . . . . . Salvadora persica, L. (*Salvadorac.*).
Ramrām . . . . Heliotropinus *sp.* (*Boragin.*).
Raqm . . . . . Rhynchosia memnoina, D.C. (*Legum.*).
Raqqī . . . . . Water-melon.
Raqrūq . . . . . Helianthemum lippii, Pers. (*Cistac.*).
Ribba (Sumaima) . . Aristida *sp.* (*Gram.*).
Ribla . . . . . Plantago coronopus, L. (*Plantagin.*).
Rimdh . . . . . Haloxylon *sp.* (*Chenopod.*).

Rukhaima . . . . Convolvulus *sp.* (*Convolvulac.*).
Rūtha . . . . . A shrub like the *Arfaj* (*q.v.*).

Sabat (Subat) . . . *Graminea sp.*
Sa'dān . . . . . Neurada procumbens, L. (*Rosac.*).
Safrī . . . . . A variety of dates.
Salam . . . . . A species of Acacia.
Sama' . . . . . A desert grass like wild barley.
Samar . . . . . A species of Acacia.
Samna . . . . . A kind of Thistle.
— (Khirriyya) . . . Saffron plant.
Sarhā . . . . . Cotoneaster nummularia, F. and M. (*Rosac.*).
Shafallah . . . . Capparis galeata, Fresen. (*Capparid.*).
Shaia . . . . . Vernonia inulaefolia, Steud. (*Compos.*).
Shajrat al Dāb . . Viola *sp.* (*Violac.*).
Sharr . . . . . A large-leaved shrub emitting a milky substance from its stalks.
Shibram . . . . A prickly desert bush.
Shinān . . . . . Arthrocnemum glaucum, Ung. (*Chenopod.*).
Shiqāra . . . . . A desert plant with purple flower.
Shirshīr . . . . . Tribulus terrestris, L. (*Zygophyll.*).
Shu'alā . . . . . Reseda amblyocarpa, Fresen. (*Resedac.*).
Sidr . . . . . The desert plum.
Sīh . . . . . A spiky desert plant.
Silij . . . . . Salsola *sp.* (*Chenopod.*).
Sirī . . . . . A variety of dates.
Sufāra . . . . . A desert plant with yellow flower.
Sulaika . . . . . Polycarpon *sp.* (*Caryophyll.*).
Sulaiyān . . . . Aristida *sp.* (*Gram.*).
Sumaima (Ribba) . . Aristida *sp.* (*Gram.*).
Suwād . . . . . Schanginia baccata, Mog. (*Chenopod.*).

Talh . . . . . A species of Acacia (gum-bearing).
Tandham . . . . A species of Broom.
Tannūm . . . . Chrozophora obliqua, Juss. (*Euphorb.*).
Tarfa . . . . . A dwarf species of Ithil (Tamarix manifera).
Tarthūth . . . . An obscene desert plant called "the desert Penis."
Thaiyil . . . . . Cynodon dactylon, Pers. (*Gram.*).
Tha'lūq . . . . . Koelpinia linearis, Pall. (*Compos.*).
— (Hama) . . . . *Crucifera sp.*
Thamām . . . . *Graminea sp.*
Tharār . . . . . Gymnosporia spinosa, Fiori [=G. montana, Benth.] (*Celastrac.*).
Thidda (Anqūt) . . *Graminea sp.*
Turanj . . . . . The Pummelow.

Wahat . . . . . A species of Acacia with very strong thorns.

Zahar . . . . . Tribulus alatris, Del. (*Zygophyll.*).
Zarriyya . . . . Agropyron orientale, Roens. and Schult. (*Gram.*).
Zarriyyat al Jabal . . Aristida hirtigluma, Steud. (*Gram.*).

Zubb al Bān . . . *See* Bān.
Zubb al Hamād (Tarthuth, *q.v.*).
? . . . . Triumphetta *sp.* (*Tiliac.*).

B. Animals, Birds, Reptiles, Insects, etc.

'Arnab . . . . . Hare.
'Arqī ('Arqiyya) . . A variety of camel.

Dāb . . . . . Snake (generic term).
Dabbās . . . . . A sickness of horses.
Daraj (Darrāj ?) . . Grey partridge (? Ortygornis pondicerianus).
Dhaba' . . . . . Hyena.
Dhabb . . . . . Armoured lizard (edible).
Dhabī . . . . . Gazelle (generic term).
Dhalūl . . . . . Female dromedary or riding-camel.

Habs . . . . . White fleece (of sheep).
Haiya . . . . . Viper.
Hajla . . . . . Grey partridge (*see* Daraj).
Hammara . . . . A species of finch.
Hanīsh . . . . . Snake (other than vipers).
Hubāra . . . . . Bustard (? Macqueeni).

'Idmī . . . . . A species of gazelle (fawn-coloured).

Jakhākh . . . . Locust (immature).
Jarab . . . . . Mange (of camels).
Jarbū' . . . . . Jerbooa rat.
Jidhā . . . . . Two-year-old (of horses, camels, etc.).
Jila . . . . . Dried venison.

Na'ām . . . . . Ostrich.
Nāqa . . . . . Adult female camel.
Nasr . . . . . Eagle.

Qu'ūd . . . . . Male dromedary or riding-camel.

Rās Marīdhān . . . A species of hawk.
Rīm . . . . . A species of gazelle (white).
Rubā' . . . . . Four-year-old (of horses, camels, etc.).
Rubīyān . . . . Prawns.

Sabrī (Slad or Srad) . A species of shrike.
Slūqī . . . . . Deerhound.
Smaqq . . . . . A species of plover.

Umm Sālim . . . . A species of bird.

Wa'l . . . . . Ibex.
Wijwij . . . . . Cricket.
Wudhaihī . . . . Oryx Leucoryx.

C. Agriculture, Irrigation, Pasture, etc.

'Amār . . . . . Cultivated land (*i.e.* with subsidiary crops under palms).
'Arīsh . . . . . Village enclosed with stockade of palm-fronds.

Darrāja . . . . . Roller (part of *Jalīb*).
Dimāl . . . . . Camel-dung.

Ghadīr . . . . . Water-hole in *Wādī* bed.

Hadhr . . . . . Preserved pasturage.
Hamāj . . . . . Brackish (of water).
Hima . . . . . Preserved pasturage.

'Idda . . . . . Superstructure of *Jalīb*.

Jalīb . . . . . Draw-well.
Jalla . . . . . Camel-dung.
Jalta . . . . . Water-hole in rock-fissure.
Jau . . . . . A depression or drainage-channel.

Kaddād . . . . Agricultural labourer.
Kārīz . . . . . An irrigation tunnel with shafts at intervals.
Khafs . . . . . A pond in natural cavity.
Khaiyūl . . . . Shepherd's "scarecrow."
Kharāb . . . . . Palm-groves without subsidiary cultivation.
Kharaz . . . . . An irrigation channel like the *Kārīz*.
Kharīma . . . . Glades in sandy tracts.
Kos . . . . . South wind.

Mahāla . . . . . Pulley on *Jalīb* structure.
Makhraj . . . . Source, point of issue.
Mausim . . . . . Date-harvest.
Mīrka . . . . . Shoulder-pad of camel.
Mish'ab . . . . . Camel-stick.
Mishāsh . . . . Exiguous source of water in sandy ground.

Nu'aim . . . . . Southern Cross.

Qaidh . . . . . Summer solstice.
Qasr . . . . . Fort-like grange.
Qirba (*pl.* Qarab) . . Water-skin (whole goat- or sheep-skin).

Rabī' . . . . . Spring.
Raudha . . . . A wooded coomb in desert depression.

Sabkha . . . . . Salt-impregnated land.
Safra . . . . . The desert.
Saif . . . . . Early summer.
Sail . . . . . A mountain torrent in spate.
Samad . . . . . Manure.
Sāqī (*pl.* Sawāqī) . . An irrigation channel.
Sha'īb . . . . . A dry torrent-bed or water-course.
Shuwwān . . . . Shepherds (of goats and sheep).
Simūm . . . . . Hot dry wind.

Thamīla . . . . Shallow depression with water.
Thaqb . . . . . Shallow water-hole in rock depression.
Thuraiya . . . . The Pleiades.

Wādī . . . . . A dry river-bed.

D. Religion

Adhān . . . . . The call to prayer.
Ahl Kitāb . . . . People of a Book, *i.e.* Jews and Christians as opposed to idolaters.
Ashā . . . . . Evening prayer.
'Asr . . . . . Afternoon prayer.

Bain al 'Asrain . . The combined prayers of midday and afternoon.

Dhuhr . . . . . Midday prayer.

Hadīth (Ahādīth) . . Traditions of the Prophet.
Hajj . . . . . The pilgrimage to Mecca.

'Īd . . . . . *Muslim* feast-day.
"Ignorance," The . The era prior to the appearance of the Prophet (but according to *Wahhabi* reckoning that before the appearance of Muhammad ibn 'Abdulwahhab).
Ihrām . . . . . White garment donned by pilgrims before entering the sacred territory.
Ikhwān . . . . The *Wahhabi* brotherhood or inner circle.
Imām . . . . . The leader of the prayers.
Islām . . . . . The Muhammadan religion.

Jāhiliyya, Al . . . *See* "Ignorance."
Jāmi' . . . . . The chief mosque of a city.
Jihād . . . . . A religious war.
Jinn . . . . . A spirit, ghost.
Jum'a . . . . . Friday (congregational prayer).

Ka'ba . . . . . The sacred "cube" at Mecca.
Kāfir . . . . . Infidel, idolater.

Khutba . . . . . A sermon.

Liwān . . . . . Portico of mosque.

Maghrib . . . . Sunset prayer.
Mālikī . . . . . One of the four orthodox schools of *Islam*.
Masjid . . . . . Mosque or praying enclosure.
Mihrāb . . . . . Niche in wall of Mosque pointing to the *Qibla*.
Muadhdhin . . . . One who calls to prayer.
Mudaiyyin . . . . One who is a *Muslim* or more especially a *Wahhabi*.
Mushrik . . . . Polytheist, infidel.
Muslim . . . . . A devotee of the Muhammadan faith.
Mutawwa' . . . . A deacon or teacher of the *Wahhabi* tenets.

Nāīb . . . . . A proctor.

Qadhā . . . . . Making good prayers or fasts not kept at the appropriate time.
Qādhī . . . . . Ecclesiastical judge.
Qibla . . . . . The prayer-direction, *i.e.* towards the Ka'ba.
Qurān . . . . . The Muhammadan scriptures.

Rik'at . . . . . Formal movements of *Muslim* prayer, a section of the prayer.

Salāt al Maghrib . . . *See* Maghrib.
Shaikh . . . . . A high priest.
Shar' . . . . . The *Muslim* religious law.
Shiā' . . . . . The '*Alid* faction of *Islam*.
Shirk . . . . . Polytheism, infidelity.
Sūra . . . . . Chapter of the *Quran*.

Tafsīr . . . . . Interpretation or exegesis of the *Quran*.
Tāghūt . . . . . The pagan system.
Takhfīf . . . . . Shortening or combination of prayers during travel.
Talāmīdh . . . . *Muslim* or *Wahhabi* neophytes.
Talāq . . . . . Divorce.
Taqsīr . . . . . *See* Takhfīf.

'Ulamā . . . . . Learned men, especially Divines of the *Wahhabi* Church.

Wahhābī . . . . Follower of Muhammad ibn 'Abdulwahhab.

E. War, Travel, Administration, Money, Clothes, Miscellaneous

Abā . . . . . Mantle.
Akhāwa . . . . . Fees exacted by *Badawin* for passage through their territory.
Amīr . . . . . Provincial governor.
Andarūn (*Persian*) . Women's apartments in oriental house.
'Aqail . . . . . Professional caravaners or guards recruited from Arabia to protect the pilgrim routes.
'Arab . . . . . Arabs generally, but especially in their peaceful pastoral aspect as opposed to Gom and Badu (*q.v.*).
'Arīfa ('Arāfa) . . . Lost property (*esp.* camels) recovered by owner.

Badū . . . . . *Badawīn*, camel-owners, as distinct from '*Arab*, *i.e.* shepherds.
Bairaq . . . . . War standard, ensign.
Bait . . . . . Tent, house.
— al Hukm (Hakūma) Government offices, court of justice.
— — Māl . . . . Crown property.
Baiza . . . . . A copper coin of Masqat (Indian *Paisa*).
Barāha . . . . . Camping ground within a town.
Barākhīs . . . . Conical sand-hillocks.
Bisht . . . . . Mantle, same as Abā.
Burghal. . . . . A sort of porridge of wheat-meal with meat and gravy.

Chupattī (*Indian*) . . Flat unleavened bread.

Daftar . . . . . Office, study.
Dhow . . . . . Sailing ship.
Dihan . . . . . Fat, grease.
Dīra . . . . . Range or territory of a *Badawin* tribe; also any large town, *e.g.* Riyadh, is called Al Dīra.
Diwāniyya . . . . Public audience-chamber.

Falj . . . . . Horseshoe-shaped pit in *Nafud* tracts.
Farwa . . . . . Sheep-skin loin-covering.

Gharāmīn . . . . Conical sand-hillocks.
Ghazū . . . . . A raid or expedition.
— 'Ām . . . . . A general muster of troops for a large expedition.
— Khās . . . . A territorial muster of troops for a small expedition.
Gom . . . . . Badawin on the war-path; any army; also enemy.

Hadhar . . . . Townsfolk, village-folk, as opposed to Badu.
Hajar . . . . . Stone, rock.
Hākim . . . . . Ruler, practically confined to Ibn Sa'ūd himself, Hākim of Najd.
Halā . . . . . Basalt, lava, black volcanic rock, *cf.* Harra.
Hamla . . . . . Baggage section of caravan.
Hammām . . . . Bath.
Hanshalī . . . . Brigand.
Harīm . . . . . Women; so *Harem* or Women's Quarters.
Harra . . . . . Volcanic rock, lava, *cf.* Halā.
Hasā . . . . . Generic term for rock; *esp.* limestone.
— Ahmar . . . . Red granite.
— Akhdhar . . . Greenstone.
Haumat al Niqy'ān . Series of conical sand-hillocks.

'Iqt . . . . . Dried curds.

Janbiyya . . . . Dagger.
Jirīsh . . . . . Wheat-meal porridge with meat and gravy.
Juss . . . . . Gypsum, lime.

Kafiyya. . . . . Headkerchief.
Kātib Takhrījiyya. . Tax-collector.
Khashm . . . . Headland.
Khushaim (Khushaiyim) Little headland.
Kitab . . . . . Camel palanquin for women.

Liban . . . . . Milk, buttermilk.

Madhīf . . . . . Guest-tent, guest-house
Maftūl . . . . . Guard-tower.
Mahnidha . . . . Stone oven.
Majlis . . . . . Public assembly, audience chamber; series of conical sand-hillocks.
Manzil . . . . . *Badawin* encampment, stage (of journey).
Maqīl . . . . . Midday resting-place.
Marāh . . . . . Evening camp.
Maria Theresa dollar . *See* Riyāl.
Marū . . . . . Marble, quartz.
Maslūt . . . . . Loophole.
Midkhan . . . . Censer for incense.
Mubarraz . . . . *See* Tabrīz; place of encampment after short march of first day.
Mudīr . . . . . Government official, director.
Muhallibī . . . . A sort of blanc-mange made of milk and sugar.
Munshī . . . . Clerk, secretary.

Nafūd . . . . . Rolling sand-desert.
Nāīb . . . . . Official subordinate to *Amir*.
Narjīl . . . . . Long-stemmed pipe; hubble-bubble.

Niqa' . . . . . Conical sand-hillock.
Nūra . . . . . Lime.

Paisa (*Indian*) . . . A copper coin (*see* Baiza).
Pāra (*Turkish*) . . A Turkish coin of low value.
Pāshā (*Turkish*) . . A high Turkish official, governor.
Pilaff (*Turkish*) . . Rice and meat cooked together.

Qaimāt . . . . . Small cakes of flour and sugar.
Qaimī . . . . . Wheat-meal porridge with meat and gravy.
Qāim Maqām . . . A Turkish official in charge of a sub-district.
Qatra . . . . . Headkerchief, *cf.* Kafiyya.
Qin . . . . . Camel-palanquin for women.
Qumruk (*Turkish*). . Customs.

Rafīq . . . . . Tribesman accompanying caravan ror its safe-conduct.
Rī' . . . . . A mountain-pass.
Riyāl . . . . . The Maria Theresa dollar or standard coin of Arabia.

Sā' . . . . . A standard weight of Arabia, equivalent to 2 *Waznas*.
Salbūkh . . . . Flint, rock.
Saman . . . . . Oil, clarified butter.
Samīl . . . . . Churn, a skin used for making buttermilk.
Samm . . . . . "Say the name of God"; a common invitation before meals and also used in reply to a summons by a superior.
Sarāī (*Turkish*) . . Government buildings.
Shaikh . . . . . A tribal chief.
Shurta . . . . . Police-force.
Shuyūkh, Al . . . Common designation of Ibn Sa'ud, the Chief *par excellence*.
Sirwāl . . . . . Baggy pantaloons.
Sultān . . . . . The Ottoman Sultan.
Sunafira . . . . Negroes, equivalent of 'Abīd.
Sūq . . . . . Market-place.

Tabrīz . . . . . Customary short march of first day of a journey.
Takrījiyya, Kātib . . Tax-collector.
Tanwīn . . . . . Sounding the *n* of case-endings as in classical Arabic.
Ta's . . . . . Conical sand-hillock.
Tawīla . . . . . A curiously shaped copper token of the Hasā.
Thaub . . . . . A long-sleeved shirt or smock.
Timman (*Temmen*) . Rice.

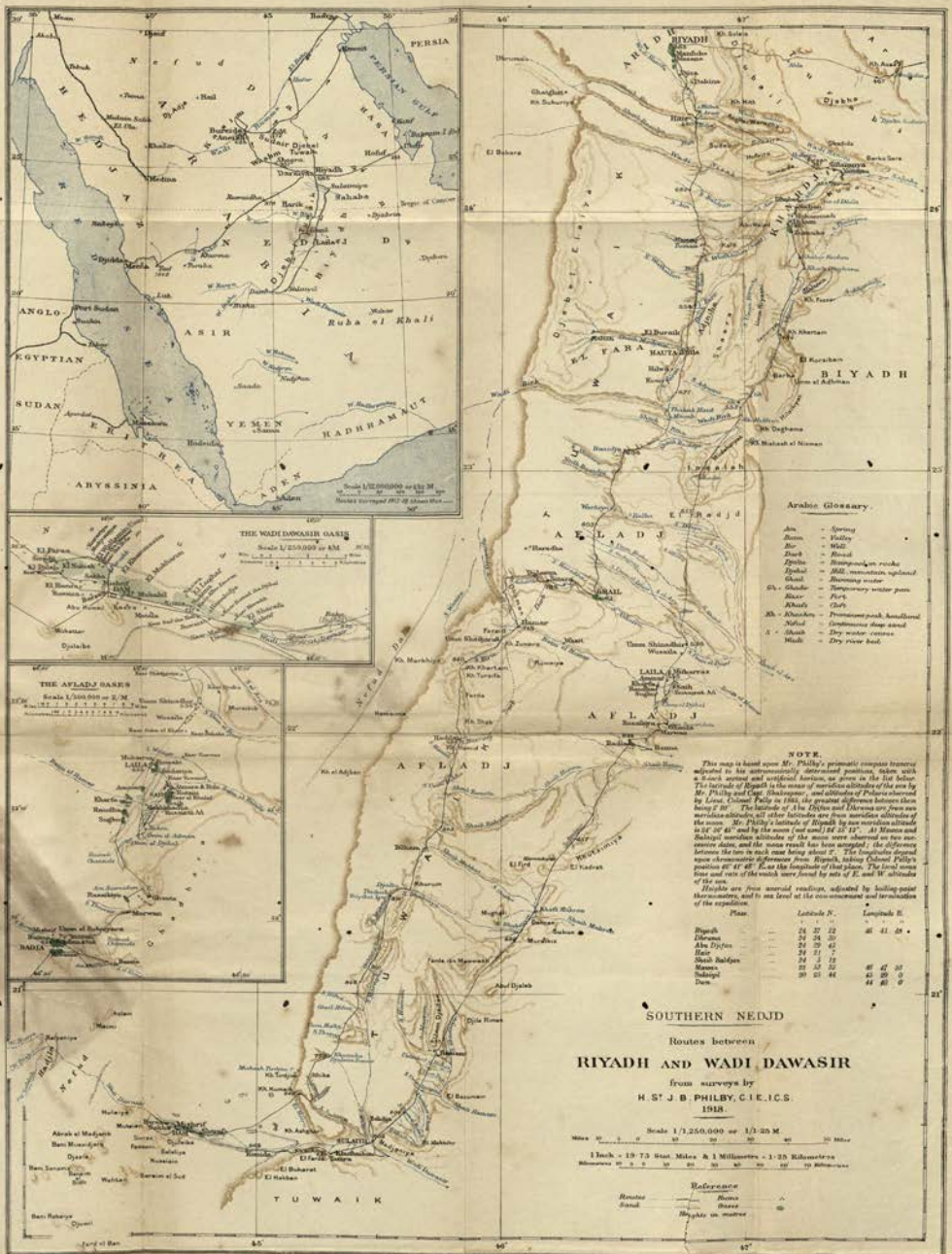
'Ushr . . . . . Tithes, the common tax.

Wakīl . . . . . Agent, representative.

Wālī . . . . . Provincial governor (*Turkish*).
Wasm . . . . . *Badawin* property mark or brand.
Wazna . . . . . A standard weight of Arabia, equivalent to the weight of 50-60 *Riyals* according to locality.
Wilāyat . . . . Province (*Turkish*).

Yūzbāshī . . . . A Turkish military rank, captain.

Zabūn . . . . . Long coat worn under *Aba*.
Zakāt . . . . . Government tax.
— ul Arūdh . . . Land-tax.
Zarnīkh . . . . An acid camel-medicine.
Zinjabīl . . . . Ginger-tea.



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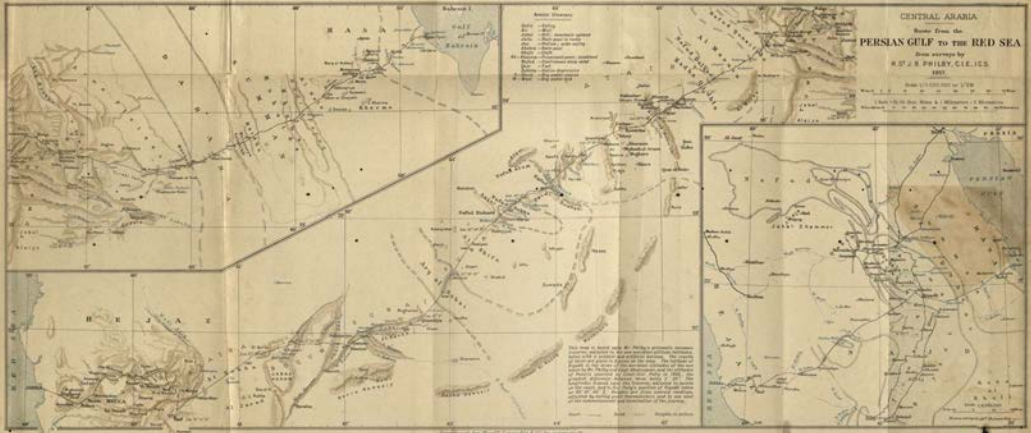
CENTRAL ARABIA
Route from the
PERSIAN GULF TO THE RED SEA
from surveys by
H.ST.J.B.PHILBY, C.I.E., I.C.S.
1917
Bahrein I.
Bahrein
Gulf of
HASA
NEJD
Riyadh
Kharma
Thaj
Hofuf
Mubarraz
Jebel Qara
Jebel Qarra
Jebel Khuraim
Jebel Summan
Jebel Tuwaiq
Jebel Aja
Jebel Salma
Jebel Shammar
Ha'il
Khaibar
Medina
Yanbu
Rabigh
Jidda
MECCA
HEJAZ
RED SEA
PERSIAN GULF
Persian Gulf
Arabian Sea
Arabic Itinerary
Route from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea
Scale 1/2 000 000 or 1/2 M
Greenwich

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